# Media Interplay

# in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's Work for

# Theatre, Cinema and Television

by

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**Declaration**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own,
and that I am solely responsible for its composition.

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Edinburgh, September 2000

# Abstract

The work of the West German artist Rainer Werner Fassbinder is as versatile as it is extensive. During the 16 years of his artistic career Fassbinder produced more than forty cinema and television films and also staged 29 plays about half of which he had written himself. In doing so he not only drew on aesthetic traditions as diverse as the German folk play, the American gangster film, Hollywood melodrama, the Theatre of Cruelty and the French Nouvelle Vague, but also worked in three media simultaneously: theatre, cinema, and television. It has repeatedly been pointed out that this versatility appears to forestall a conceptualisation of Fassbinder's work from the vantage point of its production. The present work aims at exactly such a conceptualisation by exploring the interplay between the director's work for the different media.

Right from the beginning of his artistic career Fassbinder based his aesthetic approach on the transposition of aesthetic devices from one medium to the other. Whilst his theatre plays are characterised by a montage of short scenes reminiscent of film editing, his films are marked by a stark theatricality which concerns not only the acting and the entire mise-en-scene, but also the specific ways in which camera work and editing are implemented. In the course of his artistic development Fassbinder later also included the medium of television into this aesthetic exchange, first by turning towards a more balanced aesthetics in his cinema films, conveying a more 'positive' outlook on life as television would provide it, later by carrying many of the devices he had developed in the cinema into his work for television. Thus in each medium Fassbinder breaks with conventional forms of expression and creates new possibilities through media interplay.

It is on this basis that Fassbinder achieved the astonishing versatility of his artistic output which is surprising in so far as all of Fassbinder's films are concerned with the same basic issue: the exploitation of feelings. This particular concern is fuelled by the director's own personal experiences. It rests on the insight into socio-psychological mechanisms, which are largely described by the internalisation of social patterns of behaviour. Fassbinder renders this proposition artistically by means of the various forms of media interplay which equally rest on the structure of the 'one within the other'. Fassbinder thus establishes a correspondence between the thematic structure of his films and their aesthetic rendition. It is this moment that facilitates a conceptualisation of his work which encompasses the various aesthetic periods and influences in his work. The relationship between art work and applied medium is in Fassbinder's work determined by this relationship between artistic message and media interplay.

## Preface

That the representational forms and strategies of one medium have aesthetic repercussions on the representational forms of other media is a well-established fact today. In particular in the field of the audio-visual arts, artists increasingly thrive on the various possibilities offered by the aesthetic interaction between the media. One may remind oneself of films like Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover* whose theatricality is just as apparent as the aesthetic interaction with television and painting in his more recent film *The Pillow Book*. Conversely, Armin Petras, who recently staged Fassbinder's *Lola* at a theatre in Nordhausen, Germany, has pointed out that '[e]igentlich ist der Film für das Theater noch gar nicht richtig entdeckt'.[1] Accordingly, András Fricsay's theatre productions, for instance, are increasingly marked by the use of filmic means such as 'Soundtrack, Rhythmus, Ausschnitte, szenische Überblendungen und das ständige Spiel mit Zitaten und Klischees'.[2] As the *Trend zum Theatermovie*, which was, some 25 years ago, still considered - and sometimes rejected - as mannerist, has thus taken hold in the theatre, television aesthetics, which initially mainly drew on radio's, film's and theatre's forms and devices, has begun to take up on presentational forms which have been popularised by the internet.

This tendency towards a more and more extensive aesthetic interplay between

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[1] Ralph Hammerthaler, 'Das Kino und sein Double', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 12 January 1998, 9.
[2] Ibid.

the media is not as new as it may appear. In fact, its roots reach back to the time of the historical avant-garde when artists first became aware of the aesthetic possibilities which the co-existence of two audio-visual media, i.e. film and theatre, offers. The theatricality of expressionist films like Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* or the musical character of futuristic films like Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin - Symphony of the Big City* bear witness to the avant-gardists' endeavour to benefit from the possibility of cross-fertilising different art forms. But it was not only in the medium of film that artists became aware of the aesthetic effects rendered possible through media interplay. The expressionist *Stationendrama* with its succession of relatively autonomous scenes, Sergei Eisenstein's idea of a theatre based on the montage of attractions or the separation of the elements in Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre - all these forms of theatre were, insofar as they rest on the principle of montage, inspired by the aesthetic procedures involved in cinematography. Thus, the exchange of aesthetic devices between old and new media is an aesthetic principle which has determined artistic productions in the audio-visual arts for some 80 years.

The reason for such an exchange of aesthetic devices between older and younger media is twofold. On the one hand, a new medium is not born into an empty world, but immediately finds itself in the context of all those art forms which preceded it. Therefore it does not come as a surprise that any new medium will seek to define itself within this context: it will attempt to take all those elements of the old media's aesthetic conventions on board which can be used for the building-up of its own canon of forms and representational conventions. Although a new medium is thus likely to be aesthetically rather conservative, the mere fact that the old medium's devices are used within the framework of the new medium's technical and representational conditions provides a lot of space for experimentation. Thus, the aesthetic interaction with painting enables filmmakers to explore film's visual side, the interaction with music facilitates a better understanding of the new medium's rhythmic characteristics, and the interaction with the theatre provides insight into its dramatic possibilities. In each case the outcome would not be painting, music or theatre, but whatever film as a medium can make use of for its own purposes.

On the other hand, the co-existence of an old and a new medium, both of which cover a similar range of aesthetic possibilities, puts the older medium under a considerable amount of pressure. For a new medium is, by means of its more advanced technology, not only more effective, but it also reaches a much larger audience. As the new medium thus forces the older one into a competitive relationship, the older medium generally responds by 'learning' from the new medium's aesthetic devices and strategies. However, the transposed artistic means and devices not only subvert the older medium's conventional forms of representation, but are also assimilated within its own context and tradition. Hence the aesthetic interaction with historically younger media often results in a process in which the older medium searches for and perhaps even redefines its own roots. Thus, the existence of film inspired Antonin Artaud to explicate his theory of a theatre of cruelty on the basis of his knowledge of Balinese rites and Bertolt Brecht to refer back to the Chinese theatre to develop his idea of an epic theatre. Consequently, the co-existence of a new medium with a similar range of aesthetic forms not only represents an attack on the older one on the level of competition, but also affects its self-understanding and its theoretical foundation.

Such an exchange of aesthetic devices for the sake of exploration and experiment is not unique to the interrelationship between the theatre and the cinema. In fact, when broadcast television followed the cinema to add another medium to the realm of audio-visual representation some fifty years later, a similar process of aesthetic interplay between the newly arrived medium and the established media set in. However, due to the nature of televisual representation, the aesthetic interaction with the historically older media was of a different character. On the one hand television does not produce individual works of art but a flow of programmes, which not only encompasses a wide range of artistic forms and genres, but also a selection of journalistic programmes. The aesthetic interrelationship between television and the traditional forms of audio-visual representation is therefore not so much determined by a process of aesthetic interaction but rather by a process of inclusion. On the other hand the far-reaching similarities between filmic and televisual forms of representation restrict the aesthetic impact which the new medium exercises on the

older ones. Although television has the possibility of live-transmission, both media, by and large, thrive on pre-produced works which are based on camera and montage techniques.

As television programming thus absorbs the other audio-visual art forms rather than interacts with them while adding relatively little to the canon of audio-visual forms of expression, the youngest of the three audio-visual media tends to short-circuit the forward-orientation of the avant-gardist's use of media interplay. Media interplay is no longer primarily a matter of the exploration of and the experimentation with the new medium, but assumes the shape of a reciprocal exchange within the circuit of the three audio-visual media for the sake of the artistic rendition of certain messages. It is the German playwright, filmmaker and director Rainer Werner Fassbinder who was among the first artists to become aware of and make use of this form of media interplay. As he worked simultaneously for the three audio-visual media of theatre, film and television, he, right from the beginning of his artistic career, transposed filmic and televisual devices into the theatre, used theatrical and televisual devices in his work for the cinema and carried the artistic means he developed in his work for the theatre and for the cinema into his work for television. As Fassbinder's work thus echoes the new relationship between the media in the wake of television programming, the present thesis attempts to explore the complex aesthetic interaction between his works for the three media.

As this thesis would not have come into being without all the help and support I have received over the past years, I would like to extend my warmest thanks to all those individuals who have helped make this work possible. I wish to thank my supervisors and particularly Professor Dietrich Scheunemann for their patience, encouragement and continued support which was instrumental in making the accomplishment of this thesis possible. I would like to thank the University's Faculty of Arts for the generous financial support I have received in the shape of a scholarship. My warmest thanks go equally to the entire staff of the German Department who can always be counted on for enthusiastic help and advice. Especially I would like to thank Mehrnoosh Sobhani who has invested a lot of time and work in order to keep the department's film and media library updated. I would

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# Contents

# 0.

# Introduction

In the 16 years of his artistic career between 1966 and 1982, the West German artist Rainer Werner Fassbinder scripted and directed more than forty films, some of which are multi-part television series, staged 29 plays, 14 of which he had written himself, and produced four radio plays. This enormous productivity is matched by an equally astonishing versatility. It has often been noted that Fassbinder drew on numerous genres and traditions to put his ideas across. His predilection clearly lay with the German folk play, the Hollywood melodrama and the genre of the *film noir*, but he also used the medium of film for autobiographic purposes, made period pieces, drew on the farce and Western genres, produced TV series and even shot one documentary. In order to produce such a versatile work Fassbinder let himself be inspired by such a diversity of artists like Julian Beck and Judith Malina, Marieluise Fleißer and Ödön von Horváth, Jean Marie Straub and Jean Luc Godard, Howard Hawks, Raoul Walsh and Douglas Sirk, and, last but not least, the French theatre man Antonin Artaud.

In the face of such prolific versatility the conceptualisation of Fassbinder's artistic work is a task which is - as has repeatedly been emphasised - not easily accomplished. Fassbinder, so it seems, was too liable to follow spontaneous impulses to give his work the direction of a steady evolution of his artistic talent, too ready to react to his own experiences and public events of the day to be preoccupied with one particular subject-matter, too much of an experimenter to hold on to any one

particular genre or even medium. Even a temporal succession of certain influences and generic preferences cannot entirely rid Fassbinder's work of its anarchy. For the director frequently returned to a style which he appeared to have discarded before. For example, in 1972, i.e. two years after his enthusiastic discovery of the 1950s Hollywood melodramas by Douglas Sirk, Fassbinder set out to make *Jail Bait* (*Wildwechel*) and *Fontane Effi Briest*, two films which upset any theory of easy transitions in Fassbinder's work as they return to the pattern of the folk play aesthetics and a Straub-style minimalism respectively, i.e. styles and genres which Fassbinder thrived on before he adopted the Hollywood melodrama for his own purposes. However, these two films are no exception: there are more examples like these to be found in Fassbinder's later work.

Peter Iden therefore comes to a conclusion which appears to apply to Fassbinder's entire work: there is no steady development succeeding the artistic coming-out, '[v]ielmehr folgten immer neue Anfänge'.[1] For a long time it therefore seemed that the art works' only obvious point of reference was to be found in the concrete circumstances of Fassbinder's life at the time of their production.[2] It is therefore no surprise that it has repeatedly been emphasised that a reading of Fassbinder's work which does not take its biographical background into consideration must turn out to be 'naive'. Indeed, not only are Fassbinder's personal and professional lives intertwined to an unusual extent, but Fassbinder himself often emphasised that he was only interested in producing art works which are based on his own personal experiences. That this interest never subsided and indeed applies to his entire work is underscored by the director's 1980 pronunciation that he made films because of 'persönliche[r] Betroffenheit und aus keinem anderen Grund'.[3] Apparently, personal immediacy with all its imponderables is the driving force behind his prolific artistic output.

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[1] Peter Iden, 'Der Eindruck-Macher: Rainer Werner Fassbinder und das Theater', in *Rainer Werner Fassbinder* ed. by Peter W. Jansen and Wolfram Schütte (Frankfurt/ Main: Fischer, 1982), pp. 17-28 (p. 17).

[2] The latest of these biographical interpretations are Walace Steadman Watson's *Understanding Fassbinder:Film as Private and Public Art* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996) and Christian Braad Thomsen's *Fassbinder – The Life and Work of a Provocative Genius* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1997).

[3] Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *Die Anarchie der Phantasie: Gespräche und Interviews,* ed. by Michael Töteberg (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1986), pp. 146 ff.

It is on the basis of this emphasis on personal concern and experience that Fassbinder encircles a topic area which gives unity and coherence to his otherwise so diverse œuvre: the exploitation of feelings.

> Bei mir geht es um die Ausbeutbarkeit von Gefühlen, von wem auch immer sie ausgebeutet werden. Das endet nie. Das ist ein Dauerthema. Ob der Staat die Vaterlandsliebe ausbeutet oder ob in einer Zweierbeziehung der eine den anderen kaputt macht. Das kannst du in immer neuen Variationen darstellen.[4]

As this topic area enables the director to give the insights which he draws from his personal experiences a wider social and political relevance, there are practically no limits to its repeated exploration in the most diverse areas of social life. Personage, places and times may vary considerably, the basic thematic pattern is always the same. As the emphasis on personal concern and experience thus reveals an element of unity in the versatile œuvre, it indeed encourages an interpretative approach to his work which takes the artist's biography as its vantage point.

However, if one is to believe most of the Fassbinder criticism, the element of unity and constancy in the thematic approach does not go together with an overarching stylistic principle. Those studies of Fassbinder's work, which aim to give a detailed account for the director's aesthetics, more often than not restrict themselves to the identification of certain recurrent patterns and to the pointing out of certain similarities and interfaces between individual works. This approach is taken in Peter W. Jansen's and Wolfram Schütte's anthology *Rainer Werner Fassbinder*, which still represents the standard work for any Fassbinder analysis as it meticulously documents every aspect of Fassbinder's artistic career. In the book's longest article Wilfried Wiegand identifies a certain theme, 'the doll within the doll', i.e. the internalisation of social values, as the theme on the basis of which the individual art works can be related to one another. Accordingly, it is pointed out that the story of Fassbinder's film *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (*Angst essen Seele auf*, 1973) is told in an earlier film, *The American Soldier* (Der amerikanische Soldat) of 1970, Fassbinder's film *Mother Küster's Trip to Heaven* (Mutter Küsters' Fahrt zum Himmel, 1975) begins with the news about Herr Küster's running amok, which

[4] Ibid., p. 179.

makes it appear like a continuation of *Why does Herr R. Run Amok?* (Warum läuft Herr R. Amok?, 1969), and Fassbinder's 1973 film *Martha* is called a 'trivial horror version' of *Fontane Effi Briest*.[5] Although these observations are valuable, the book fails to establish a convincing connection between Fassbinder's theme, his style and the overall structure of his œuvre.

In a slightly different vein, Thomas Elsaesser's more recent study *Fassbinder's Germany: History, Identity, Subject*, is primarily concerned with the consideration of Fassbinder's relationship to German history, the West Germany of his day and his own German identity. However, having developed this framework, Elsaesser soon has to admit that although many of Fassbinder's works are indeed concerned with the reality of the German past and present, the artist can at best be considered 'the chronicler of the inner history of the Federal Republic' in so far as he concentrates on the 'politics of intersubjectivity'.[6] On this basis Elsaesser revises his earlier approach, which proceeds from the 'viscous circle' in the socio-psychological disposition of Fassbinder's characters, in order to move on to the concept of 'double binds', coercive situations which ensnare Fassbinder's characters in 'no win' situations. However, as he moves on to establish a connection between the individual art works, the author takes recourse to the kind of intertextuality which moves along the same lines as the one pointed out in the book edited by Jansen and Schütte:

> Re-viewing his films, across their generic diversity and even their stylistic unevenness, one cannot but be struck by the persistence of an overall conception, which is to say, the rather extraordinary purposiveness of the œuvre. This I attempted to document, for instance, by emphasizing the 'serial', 'sequel', 'prequel' connexions between the films, either made with the same actors and slightly varying the same story line, or looking at the same constellation from different vantage points and across different historical configurations.[7]

Although Elseasser spends more time exploring the concrete structural and material means used in Fassbinder's productions than Jansen's and Schütte's documentation

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[5] Wilhelm Roth, 'Kommentierte Filmographie', in *Rainer Werner Fassbinder*, ed. by Peter W. Jansen and Wolfram Schütte (Frankfurt/ Main: Fischer, 1982), pp. 119-269 (pp. 165, 177, 168).

[6] Thomas Elsaesser, *Fassbinder's Germany: History, Identity, Subject* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), p. 22.

[7] Ibid., pp. 240-241.

of the filmmaker's work, in the context of a search for an overall aesthetic conception it does not appear much less sporadic in its scope. Elsaesser's approach to Fassbinder's work, too, fails to establish a link between the microstructure of individual works and the macrostructure of his entire œuvre.

Instead of trying to investigate the aesthetic structures of Fassbinder's œuvre from within, another recent study considers his artistic work from the vantage point of its reception. In her book *Television Tabloids and Tears: Fassbinder and Popular Culture* Jane Shattuc draws attention to the various ways in which Fassbinder differentiates the concrete artistic rendering of his works of art in order to take audience expectancies in the different media environments into account. The director thus no longer appears as an 'auteur' filmmaker whose personality and personal views provide the main point of reference for his aesthetics. Instead, the emphasis is on the fissures and breaks in Fassbinder's work: Shattuc establishes an aesthetic division between Fassbinder's work for the theatre, for the cinema and for television, which results in what the author calls the 'institutional genres' in his work. Shattuc describes Fassbinder's theatre work in terms of 'shock pop'; his cinema films are identified as 'confessional melodramas' while his work for television is characterised as melodramatised, but otherwise faithful 'literary adaptations'.[8] These institutional genres are interpreted not only in relation to the different media conventions, but also in the light of the public reactions to them.

Whilst it has always been beyond doubt that Fassbinder's theatre work is somewhat removed from his work for cinema and television, the aesthetic differentiation between cinema and television had hardly been contemplated up to that point. It is only in Thomas Thieringer's article *Memories of Fassbinder's TV Work* that a viable differentiation between Fassbinder's cinema and television work had so far been established. However, this differentiation between the two different approaches to the technical media does not aim at an in-depth exploration of the artistic rendering of the films and series, but at the in each case predominant mode of production. For the main argument in Thieringer's article is that Fassbinder produced considerably more literary adaptations for television than for the cinema. According

[8] Jane Shattuc, *Television, Tabloids and Tears: Fassbinder and Popular Culture* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. 106-107.

to his research the ratio of original subjects and adaptations in his cinema work is 5:1, whereas in television it is 1:2.[9] Thus, when Shattuc's subdivision of Fassbinder's film output runs along the lines of 'confessional melodrama' and 'faithful literary adaptations', this is evidently in keeping with Thieringer's analysis.

Notwithstanding this support from an earlier exploration of the director's work, Shattuc's labelling of the different institutional genres is not unproblematic. On the one hand Fassbinder's work for television embraces considerably more than just literary adaptations. Apart from the original films mentioned by Thieringer, Fassbinder's television work also comprises two television series, *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* (Acht Stunden sind kein Tag, 1972) and *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980), two studio productions of his theatre plays on video, *The Coffee Shop* (Das Kaffeehaus, 1970) and *Bremen Freedom* (Bremer Freiheit, 1972), a personality show for Brigitte Mira, *Like a Bird on a Wire* (Wie ein Vogel auf dem Draht, 1974) as well as the documentary *Theatre in Trance* (Theater in Trance, 1981). Thus, the director's work for television is by no means restricted to literary adaptations and not even to story-telling film entertainment in general. However, even this being granted, it still appears quite difficult to justify a separation of institutional genres in Fassbinder's work as rigid as the one suggested by Jane Shattuc. For there is a considerable amount of border-crossing in Fassbinder's work for the different media, which is not taken into account.

One kind of such border-crossing is constituted by what Torsten Bügner has termed *Medienparallelismus*: Fassbinder frequently adapted his own works for another medium.[10] The first adaptation was carried out as early as 1969 when the director turned the play *Katzelmacher* into his second full-length feature film. Subsequently, Fassbinder adapted many of his plays for various technical media. The plays *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* and *Iphigenia in Tauris by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe* (Iphigenie auf Tauris von Johann Wolfgang von Goethe) were adapted for the radio in 1970 and 1971; between 1970 and 1977 the plays *The American Soldier* (Der amerikanische Soldat), *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (Die bitteren Tränen der

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[9] Thomas Thieringer, 'Memories of Fassbinder's TV Work', in *Fassbinder*, ed. by Tony Rayns (London: British Film Institute, 1980), pp. 65-69 (pp. 65-66).

[10] Torsten Bügner, *Annäherung an die Wirklichkeit: Gattung und Autoren des neuen deutschen Volksstücks* (Frankfurt/Main, Bern, New York: Peter Lang, 1986), p. 48.

Petra von Kant) and Fassbinder's version of Claire Boothe's *The Women*, *Women in New York* (Frauen in New York), were, like *Katzelmacher* before, adapted for the cinema, whilst in 1970 Fassbinder's stage version of Marieluise Fleißer's *Pioneers in Ingolstadt* (Pioniere in Ingolstadt) was adapted as a television film for the second German television channel ZDF. The two plays for whose adaptation Fassbinder employed video technology have already been mentioned. Moreover, the director produced two different versions of his TV mini-series *The Stationmaster's Wife* (*Bolwieser*, 1977), thus adapting a television genre for theatrical release. Obviously, the simultaneous engagement with a number of different media encourages the carrying-over of art works from one medium to the other.

Another kind of border-crossing between the media in Fassbinder's work is constituted by the director's own reflections about the possible effects to be achieved in the different media. It is predominantly in the medium of film that Fassbinder reflects about the production conditions and the aesthetic effects of the various media: the 1970 film *The Niklashausen Journey* (Die Niklashauser Fart) begins with a discussion as to whether or not it is legitimate to use *theatrical* means to promote the cause of the revolution; in the film *Beware of a Holy Whore* (Warnung vor einer heiligen Nutte) of the same year Fassbinder contemplates his own way of *film* production, and *The Third Generation* (Die dritte Generation, 1979) shows how even extremist terrorists are exposed and subjected to the all-pervasive power of *television*. That these examples indeed invite an interpretation in terms of an active contemplation of the nature of the different media on the part of the artist is confirmed by John Ellis in his book *Visible Fictions*. Here he has noted that

> [w]hen each medium represents itself, when TV shows us a TV studio, when a film shows us film-makers, they are more or less explicit about these expected attitudes on the part of their spectators. The assumptions are even more pronounced when one medium describes the other: when cinema shows the TV image and its uses, when TV calls upon the category 'film' to justify certain aspects of its programming.[11]

Consequently, as Fassbinder not only explores the various media in a practical way

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[11] John Ellis, *Visible Fictions* (London, Boston, Melbourne, Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 77.

by means of adaptation, but also reflects about them in his art works, describing his differentiation of 'institutional genres' without taking the interfaces into account distorts the aesthetic reality of his work. Fassbinder not only worked for several media at the same time, but also took advantage of this parallelism by having the different media reflect upon one another.

However, the interfaces between the different media in Fassbinder's work not only concern the technique of adaptation and the media's reciprocal reflection, but also the art works' own aesthetic rendition. Right from the beginning of his artistic career Fassbinder based his aesthetic approach on the transposition of aesthetic devices from one medium to the other. Whilst his *antiteater* plays are characterised by a montage of short scenes reminiscent of film aesthetics, his films are marked by a stark theatricality which concerns not only the acting and the entire mise-en-scene, but also the specific ways in which camera work and editing are implemented. Although the director repeatedly changes its point of reference over the years, practically all of Fassbinder's films are marked by such theatricality. For whilst the theatricality in the early films is very much indebted to the *antiteater*'s performance style, in the years following the discovery of the melodramas of Douglas Sirk in 1970 Fassbinder gave it a decidedly melodramatic twist. This approach was again revised in the second half of the 1970s when the filmmaker took elements of a rather Artaudian aesthetics of disturbance on board. Besides, in the course of his artistic development Fassbinder also included the medium of television into this aesthetic exchange, first by turning towards a more balanced aesthetics in his cinema films, aiming at a more 'positive' outlook on life as television would provide it, later by carrying many of the devices he had developed in the cinema into his work for television.

This principle of using one medium's aesthetic devices in another medium corresponds to the issue dealt with on the thematic level of Fassbinder's works: the exploitation of feelings. For as Wiegand has shown, the exploitation of feelings is likewise cause and result of a process of internalisation. Fassbinder shows on a very personal level, how the highly problematic interaction between the characters not only betrays the signs of internalised social patterns of behaviour, but also how these

patterns are passed on in social intercourse. Thus on the thematic level, too, the plays and films are characterised by a structure of the one within the other: the personal is informed by the social other. It is in the making-apparent of this internalisation, of the social within the personal, that media interplay fulfils its aesthetic function in Fassbinder's works of art. The transposed means are used to help accentuate, motivate or explain the characters' interaction insofar as they convey their states of mind. Thus each of the director's works is characterised by the same basic stylistic principle, namely a correspondence between two structures of internalisation on their formal and thematic levels.

It is because of this correspondence between the thematic and the aesthetic levels in Fassbinder's works that the concept of media interplay provides the means to conceptualise his work in a more comprehensive way than has been done so far. For the principle of the 'one informing the other' is what appears to facilitate the repeated treatment of the same topic by means of a great diversity of artistic forms, thus giving Fassbinder's work unity in diversity. Within this framework the numerous instances of intertextuality and story variation, which, according to Elsaesser and other critics, permeate the director's work, will appear as just another aspect of the interaction between the media. For the various links between the individual art works give Fassbinder's work the character of an ongoing series, a fact which puts its macrostructure in the aesthetic proximity of television aesthetics. Thus, media interplay not only provides an explanation for the structural characteristics of the individual works' microstructure, but also for the macrostructure of the director's entire artistic output. Consequently, the concept of media interplay facilitates the establishment of a connection between Fassbinder's theme, his style and the overall structure of his œuvre.

# Part I

## Rainer Werner Fassbinder and the Media: The Development of an Aesthetic

## I.1

## The Conveyance of Personal Experience in Different Media Environments

### I.1.1 Fassbinder's Early Play about Filmmaking - An Artist's Manifesto?

Fassbinder not only contemplates the mode of production, the aesthetic effects and the institutional framework of the different media in the medium of film but also in the theatre. In fact, the beginning of his artistic career in the theatre is marked by a play which questions the possibility of artistic truthfulness, the mode of production and the institutional constraints in the West German film production of the 1960s. The play, whose title is *Just One Slice of Bread* (Nur eine Scheibe Brot), was written in order to take part in a competition organised by the *Junge Akademie* in Munich in 1966. It is about the problems of a film director, who wants to reveal and convey the immediate truth of the atrocities which took place in the Auschwitz concentration camp during the Third Reich. As this subject-matter is developed to be performed on stage, the involvement of two different media (theatre as the institutional framework of the play and film as its subject-matter), raises expectations for some indication as to the author's attitude towards the two media and his approach to artistic representation in general.

While the filmmaker's friends and collaborators are full of enthusiasm about the film project - they predict that the film will bring in a lot of money - the film director increasingly falls prey to his own doubts about it. For his own historical

distance from the reality of the Third Reich gives him the feeling that he is unable to relate to and thus come to terms with the Holocaust as a subject-matter. His aim to show the 'Unsagbarkeit des Ganzen',[1] is undermined by his own realisation that any attempt at representing the reality of those days in a film cannot but belittle what happened there during the Third Reich. His statement: 'Wir haben heute alle den nötigen Ernst nicht mehr', applies also to himself: the filmmaker's moral standards collide with the circumstances of his own historical situation.[2] At the end of the play the producer of the Auschwitz film unintentionally confirms the director's misgivings by praising the film as a very enjoyable thriller which has won three *Bundesfilmpreise* and received the rating 'particularly valuable'. Historical distance, which even turns the Holocaust into a theme park,[3] appears to have worked in favour of the film's entertainment value.

The missing link between the topic of Auschwitz and the film crew is, and this may sound sarcastic, 'genuine experience'. This is the core of the problem dealt with in *Just One Slice of Bread.* Hardly any of the characters in the play seem to be able really to understand what Auschwitz meant to people. As has been mentioned, this also applies to the filmmaker. His way of approaching people by asking them: 'Bist du Jude?' may at first sight appear to be a mere provocation.[4] Yet, hidden behind this there appears to be something else: the search for somebody who would indeed feel personally concerned. Apparently, the acquaintance with a Jewish person would have enabled the filmmaker to bridge the historical distance between those years of the Third Reich and the time when he set out to make his film, presumably the 1960s. However, as the filmmaker does not meet anybody who would have been able to provide the perspective of the Holocaust's victims, he, in the process of making the film, grasps as much as to say that the film should never have been conceived of.

In retrospect, the decision of the character can largely be identified with Fassbinder's own attitude. In fact, Fassbinder's combination of theatre and film, the

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[1] Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 'Nur eine Scheibe Brot', *Theater Heute*, 5 (1994), 29-33 (p. 31).
[2] Ibid., p. 30.
[3] Richard Appignanesi and Chris Garratt, *Postmodernism for Beginners* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 1995), p. 122.
[4] Fassbinder, 'Nur eine Scheibe Brot', 29-33 (p. 31).

arrangement of putting a film director on a theatre stage suggests a reading of the play in which Fassbinder puts an *alter ego* on stage in order to run through a role model. In this context, the consequences to be drawn from the short play read like an artist's manifesto. First and foremost it foreshadows Fassbinder's aspiration not to get entangled in ideological questions and instead only make films which can be justified on the basis of his own personal experiences. The way in which this question is dealt with in the play indicates that experience is not so much a question of how to address a certain audience, a question which, according to Thomas Elsaesser, is relevant for many of the new German filmmakers,[5] but rather a question of representation and the legitimisation of enunciation. As there is no collective whose membership could possibly provide a secure perspective, the artist can only speak for himself, i.e. rely on his own personal experience.

Secondly, and in close connection with the first point just made, Fassbinder obviously expects it to be difficult to develop the aesthetics of personal films within the film subsidy system as it had come to exist in the Federal Republic. The director's early play 'reflects the fact that under a mixed funding system and outside the commercial market, all films represent a compromise of conflicting expectations and calculations'.[6] Unlike the Oberhausen group, who meant to enhance the German film subsidy system by the 1964 establishment of the *Kuratorium Junger Deutscher Film*,[7] Fassbinder did not believe in the idea of an avant-gardist *Gremienkino*. Thus Fassbinder moved away from the Oberhausen group's rejection of the mainstream German film of the 1950s and 60s,[8] repeatedly criticised the bureaucracy and the

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[5] Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema: A History* (Houndmills, London: Macmillan Press, 1989), p. 158.

[6] Ibid., p. 152.

[7] The aim of the *Kuratorium* was to give young, aspiring filmmakers the chance to make their *first* film as the public institutions concerned with film promotion evaluated applications for subsidies on the basis of a previously made *Referenzfilm*.

[8] In the *Oberhausen Manifesto* of 1962 a clear line was drawn between the young filmmakers' aspirations and those of the 'old' German film industry: 'Der Zusammenbruch des konventionellen deutschen Films entzieht einer von uns abgelehnten Geisteshaltung endlich den wirtschaftlichen Boden. [...] Der alte Film ist tot. Wir glauben an den neuen.' - 'Oberhausener Manifest', in *Augenzeugen: 100 Texte neuer deutscher Filmemacher*, ed. by Hans Helmut Prinzler and Eric Rentschler (Frankfurt/M.: Verlag der Autoren, 1988), p. 29. For a comprehensive discussion of the decline of the mainstream German cinema in the 1960's and 70's see: Martin Blaney, *Symbiosis or Confrontation? The Relationship between the Film Industry and Television in the Federal Republic of Germany from 1950 to 1985* (Berlin: Rainer Bohn, 1992).

implicit censorship which came to be characteristic of the German funding system and in 1977 even threatened to leave the country for Hollywood.[9] Thus, the early play appears to foreshadow his 1974 plea for a more audience-oriented and hence commercialised 'German Hollywood cinema':

> Das Beste, was ich mir vorstellen könnte, wäre ..., so eine Verbindung zu schaffen zwischen einer Art, Film zu machen, die so schön und kraftvoll und so wunderbar sind wie Hollywoodfilme und die trotzdem nicht unbedingt Bestätigungen sind.[10]

Apparently, commercial film production, which is generally aimed at emotional engagement, is considered to be more favourable to an aesthetics of personal experience than a state-controlled funding system. For although Fassbinder insists that his films are 'contemplative',[11] he finds himself in agreement with the commercial mode of film production insofar as it rejects an idea of 'art', which he regards as contrived and removed from life (Fassbinder: 'Ich mag Kunst nicht.'[12]). Against this background it is not surprising that the Hollywood director Douglas Sirk became Fassbinder's model director because he managed to achieve both 'die Bedürfnisse des Systems zu erfüllen und trotzdem persönliche Filme zu machen'.[13] Obviously, Fassbinder thought it easier to avoid the pitfalls of commercial film production than those of the German film subsidy system and eventually preferred to do business with representatives of 'Papas Kino' like Luggi Waldleitner and Manfred Purzer when he produced *Lili Marleen* in 1980.[14] As the early play shows, it is right from the beginning that Fassbinder aspired to move away from the pattern of subsidised film production which dominated the film production in the West Germany of the late 1960s and 1970s.

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[9] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, pp. 94-99.
[10] Wilfried Wiegand, 'Interview I', in *Rainer Werner Fassbinder* ed. by Peter W. Jansen and Wolfram Schütte (Frankfurt/ Main: Fischer, 1982), pp. 75-94 (p. 93).
[11] Cf. Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 39.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., p. 143.
[14] For a detailed investigation into the relationship between Fassbinder's critique of modernity and his attitude towards the culture industry, see Anthony Klink, 'Rainer Werner Fassbinder's Curious Dialectic of Enlightenment', in *Seminar. A Journal of Germanic Studies*, Special Issue on Recent German Film, 33,4 (1997).

## I.1.2 The 'Exploitation of Feelings'. Fassbinder's Approach to the Project of Creating Personal Art.

Fassbinder's interest in the issue of the exploitation of feelings results in a socio-psychological pattern in which the protagonists repeatedly become victims of love. Starting point for most of his films and plays is the protagonist's experience of being deprived of a loved object, or, to put it in a more general way, of being deprived of some kind of strongly desired human relationship. Weakened by the loss of emotional support, the main character projects his/her desires onto another object without taking into account that in doing so s/he enters a new, unknown social environment. In this new environment social rules apply which may generally be characterised by emotional coldness, egotism and calculation. Since the protagonist has usually neither the experience nor the strength needed to deal with these rules, it is just a matter of time until the unfulfilled desires of the trusting protagonist are easily and ruthlessly taken advantage of. The clash of two different mind sets under the sign of emotional involvement usually puts the protagonist in a situation in which s/he has to pass severe tests, usually in the form of betrayals. Thus, what Fassbinder calls the exploitation of feelings is more precisely termed the exploitation of unfulfilled desires.

Although this basic initial pattern recurs in practically all of Fassbinder's works, it can be varied in many different ways. While Mother Küster in *Mother Küster's Trip to Heaven* (Mutter Küsters' Fahrt zum Himmel, 1975) is exploited by political extremists as she seeks to gain justice for her husband, who killed himself in a fit of running amok, Peter in *I Only Want You to Love Me* (Ich will doch nur, daß ihr mich liebt, 1976), ends up in prison as he can only think of one way to show his love for his wife: rejected as a child, the grown man cannot stop himself from wooing his wife with presents which by far exceed his financial capability. Maria in *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (Die Ehe der Maria Braun, 1978), then, seeks to redeem her prisoner husband by profiting from West Germany's economic miracle, only to be betrayed by a deal struck behind her back between her business partner / lover and her husband. Thus no matter if the characters are indeed exploited or if they

exploit themselves in the hope for some emotional return, Fassbinder portrays vulnerable characters whose emotional needs are - from the outset or in the course of the story - exploited to the extent that their self-esteem is severely damaged.

However, Fassbinder does not stop at the depiction of the downfall of the good and innocent victim that has become ensnared in what Elsaesser calls 'double binds', i.e. a situation that neither allows them to go forwards nor backwards. For the fact that Fassbinder's characters are betrayed and victimised does not necessarily make them good in a moral sense. As the above examples show, Fassbinder makes it quite clear that it is an almost intrinsic part of the victim's psychology that s/he is prone to identify him/herself with the oppressing other because s/he associates it with freedom: they want to make themselves fit in with the dominant part of society. Thereby suppression is not only afflicted, but is also actively reproduced; social suppression is translated into self-repression for the sake of self-assertion. Internalising power structures in this way ultimately means the renunciation of the wish for emancipation and instead alienates the characters from themselves. The result is what Thomas Elsaesser has termed Fassbinder's 'vicious circles':[15] as the character's emotions are silenced, their complicity in this process perpetuates the emotional crippling. The rather schizoid psychology, which results from this, turns Fassbinder's characters into bloodless 'zombies', or, as Brian Duren has called some of them, 'vamps'.[16]

As Fassbinder's protagonists reproduce the role patterns of social power even though they often lack the means to execute them, it is not surprising that violence, murder and suicide make up an essential part of the plot construction. Most of Fassbinder's works end either in running amok like in *Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?* (1969), serial killing as in the plays *Bremen Freedom* and *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*, murder as in *Whity* (1970) and *Despair* (1977), a sado-masochist trap with no escape in *Martha* (1973), a fatal accident in *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, terrorist raids in the films *Mother Küsters's Trip to Heaven* (1975) and *The Third Generation* (1979),

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[15] Thomas Elsaesser, 'A Cinema of Vicious Circles', in *Fassbinder*, ed. by Tony Rayns (London: British Film Institute, 1980), pp. 24-36.

[16] Brian Duren, 'Fassbinder's Trilogy of Vamps', in *Sex and Love in Motion Pictures. Proceedings of the Annual Conference on Film*, ed. by Douglas Radcliff-Umstead, (Kent: Kent State University, 1984).

or suicide as in *In a Year with Thirteen Moons* (In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden, 1978) and in *The Longing of Veronika Voss* (Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss, 1981). All the attempts at realising one's own wish for happiness against the dominant ideology of emotional coldness and ruthless calculation ends in a failed attempt at self-assertion, regardless of whether they are as victims or victimisers.

It is striking to see that there is practically no social sphere for which the filmmaker does not show the validity of the basic pattern described above: there appears to be no section of society, however marginal, in which feelings would not be repressed and exploited. Whilst the films *Fontane Effi Briest*, *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, *Lili Marleen* (1980), *Lola* (1981) and perhaps even *Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?* show us 'mainstream' characters who are victimised by their own success, as it is achieved at the expense of emotional fulfilment and happiness, many of the remaining films focus on characters from the margins of modern capitalist society. Thereby it becomes clear that the milieus of foreign guest-workers, homosexual couples, left-wing extremists, working-class characters, physical disability and even transsexuality are no save-haven from the cruel behavioural pattern. So if most of Fassbinder's characters are underdogs and outsiders this is not due to the 'interesting' aspects of their lives, but to the artist's determination to show that even those who are most disenfranchised by the exploitation of feelings, still reproduce the cruel behavioural pattern. As Fassbinder's works thus suggest that the social practice of emotional exploitation is all-pervasive there is no outside to this condition.

The fact that there appears to be no hiding place from the exploitative pattern has repercussions on the representation of the characters. For as the all-pervasive nature of the social exploitation of feelings makes it quite futile to lay one's inner self open, the focus on the psychological mechanisms and effects of the characters' internalisation of the social other never results in a psychological debate. Instead of dissecting his characters' psychology, Fassbinder goes along with their silence, circumvents any kind of verbal explanation and thus applies a phenomenology, which is as respectful as it is relentless. All the spectator learns about the characters is what they themselves allow to come to the surface. Fassbinder insists on

representing his characters as 'whole persons', complete with a will of their own and therefore responsible for their own doing. As what happens inside the characters thus remains concealed, all they can be defined by is their social selves. Consequently, it is from the way in which the characters deal with their social situation and their success or failure in coping with it that conclusions can be drawn as to their state of mind.

Notwithstanding Fassbinder's phenomenological distance, it becomes quite clear that his characters are not able to live up to the requirements of their social roles. In spite of the enormous effort they make in order to meet them, the strain involved appears to be so strong that at any random point in time they give the impression that there is something generally wrong with them as if a spell has been cast on them. For the characters not only display what they want to show of themselves to the outside world, but also send out unconscious signals which indicate the split between the social role, which they intend to perform, and their real selves, or, in Fassbinder's vocabulary, their 'soul'. This split gives Fassbinder's films a high degree of outright theatrical artificiality: not only do the characters often move as if they were on a stage, but they also do so in a rather distracted fashion complete with reactions which are often considerably delayed. Because of these conflicting forces in the characters' personalities Thomas Elsaesser has remarked quite pertinently that the spectator not only worries whether the characters will pass the tests which social life puts to them, but also whether the actors themselves will be able to 'keep up the pretence'.[17]

It is this theatrical artificiality in Fassbinder's films, which not only reintroduces the psychological refinement, which is avoided in the use of language, but also enables the director to convey his message. For it facilitates a double perspective: the characters are simultaneously observed from the outside and from the inside. On the one hand character interaction takes place under the sign of emotional exploitation, an eminently social problem; on the other hand the theatrical rendering of the characters' signals of emotional repression open up the perspective of their subjective reality. As the overlap of the subjective and objective realities thus

[17] Elsaesser, 'A Cinema of Vicious Circles', pp. 24-36 (p. 29).

always threatens to let the story fall apart, it gives rise to a stylistic break in the representation of the events depicted, which enables Fassbinder to raise his voice and give way to his authorial expressivity. In fact, Jane Shattuc has pointed out how important the narrative breaks are if one seeks to identify the director's voice in his works.[18] However, while she bases her assessment on a number of concrete artistic devices used, it appears to be this much more fundamental break between the objective reality depicted and the subjective reality of the characters which allows Fassbinder to give authorial commentaries in his works.

This double perspective has given rise to numerous classifications of the director's work. Robert Burgoyne, for instance, takes the artificiality of Fassbinder's aesthetic approach as a basis for his claim that the artist never goes beyond the limits of melodrama. Considering the directors's aesthetics in the context of *In a Year with 13 Moons*, he subsumes his stylistic peculiarities under the melodramatic genre because in melodrama 'the internal conflicts ... are exteriorized as conflicts between the active social world and passive sympathetic innocents...'[19] Other critics interpret Fassbinder's films in terms of a playful 'camp sensibility', because their aesthetics appear to be in line with camp's endeavour to 'make artifice and theatricality an ideal'.[20] However, when Johannes von Molte asks in his article *Camping in the Art Closet*: 'Where does camp end and melodrama begin?',[21] and concludes that 'camp feeds on the melodramatic excesses of Fassbinder's films,'[22] the unreliability of these classifications begins to become obvious. Yet, it is not only melodrama and the aesthetics of camp that seem to overlap; the melodramatic genre and the aesthetics of Brecht's epic theatre, too, appear to intersect in Fassbinder's work. To substantiate this, Gerd Gemünden refers to 'melodrama's tendency to exteriorize psychological conflict', a feature which 'can be compared to the Brechtian Gestus.'[23]

The fact that all these approaches can be collapsed into one another already

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[18] Shattuc, *Television, Tabloids and Tears*, pp. 122-125.
[19] Robert Burgoyne, 'Narrative and Sexual Excess', *October*, 21 (1982), 51-61 (p. 53).
[20] Johannes von Moltke, 'Camping in the Art Closet' *New German Critique*, 63 (1994), 77-106 (p. 80).
[21] Ibid., p. 82.
[22] Ibid., p. 83.
[23] Gerd Gemünden, 'Re-fusing Brecht: The Cultural Politics of Fassbinder's German Hollywood', *New German Critique*, 63 (1994), 55-75 (p. 70).

indicates their weakness. But also if one considers the points made individually, their shortcomings cannot be overlooked. Firstly, Fassbinder's predilection for the melodramatic genre is widely known and is therefore a legitimate tool for the interpretation of his work. However, how is the stylistic artificiality in those works to be explained which Fassbinder made before he appropriated the Hollywood melodrama for his own purposes in 1971? Obviously, the stylistic artificiality is prior to Fassbinder's generic preference and should therefore not be taken as an absolute. Secondly, Fassbinder's homosexual orientation is equally no secret; yet to put him in the context of American camp appears to be one of those 'productive misunderstandings',[24] which Beate Uhrmeister has pointed out:

> [Der] Manierismus und [die] artifizielle Künstlichkeit der Räume, zweifellos ein Merkmal von Fassbinder-Filmen, läßt Amerikaner *camp* assoziieren. Wenn er jedoch kleinbürgerliche Wohnzimmer im Stil des 'Gelsenkirchener Barock' ausstattet, so wird man das Gemälde mit dem röhrenden Hirsch über dem Sofa nicht allein als Zeichen seiner Vorliebe für Kitsch deuten. Der ironisch-bissige Blick auf die Kleinbürger-Idylle, für den deutschen Zuschauer fast penetrant deutlich, wird von der amerikanischen Kritik nicht einmal geahnt.[25]

Finally, the repeated attempts to put Fassbinder's work in the tradition of Brecht's epic theatre have been refuted by the artist himself. Asked as to whether he saw himself in a Brechtian tradition, Fassbinder replied:

> Nein, eher mit dem Österreicher Ödön von Horváth, der interessiert sich, im Gegensatz zu Brecht, direkt für die Menschen. Ich würde eher Alexander Kluge mit Brecht vergleichen und mich selbst mit Horváth. Kluges Verfremdung ist intellektuell wie Brechts, während meine stilistisch ist.[26]

Consequently, as all of the above classifications appear to have been imposed upon Fassbinder's aesthetics rather than derived from it, none of them can convincingly

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[24] In his chapter on Fassbinder, Thomas Waugh actually deplores the fact that the director refuses 'to be a spokesperson for the gay movement' and calls it 'undeniably frustrating'. – Thomas Waugh, *The Fruit Machine. Twenty Years of Writings on Queer Cinema* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 45.

[25] Beate Uhrmeister, 'It was indeed a German Hollywood Film', in *Rainer Werner Fassbinder* (Munich: edition text+kritik, 1989), 80-85 (p. 83).

[26] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 41.

explain the stark artificiality in Fassbinder's work.

However, while the search for aesthetic traditions thus appears as little helpful, Fassbinder's statement about his relationship to Brecht contains a hint as to where to look for the source of his initial inspiration: his anti-ideological, direct interest in people. Relying on his personal experience, Fassbinder points out that it is the characters themselves who

> leiden an Widersprüchen, die Widersprüche finden in ihnen statt. Das habe ich aber schon sehr früh gesagt: daß ich keine Lust habe, Filme zu machen, die mit Modellen spielen oder mit Ideologien, sondern daß ich über nichts als über Menschen Bescheid weiß, daß ich von nichts als von Menschen eine Ahnung habe, wenn überhaupt, und daß ich persönlich mit Modellen und so weiter in der Arbeit nichts anfangen kann, wie ich auch in meinem Leben nichts damit anfangen kann.[27]

That this profession of a rather anthropological approach is indeed sufficient in order to explain the foregrounded artificiality in Fassbinder's works can be demonstrated by a reference to Elizabeth Burns's study *Theatricality: A Study of Convention in the Theatre and in Social Life*. In this book she clearly shows that everyday social life itself relies on 'social norms which have become alienated ... and so reified, objectified, compelling',[28] so that 'the analogy of social with theatrical performance is ... so familiar that its extension can be easily handled':[29]

> There is ... inherent in the process of socialisation a progressive movement towards the organisation of mimetic behaviour into role-playing. This has a subjective and an objective aspect. Not only does society provide the individual with positions and the techniques for performing the roles attached to them, the individual is also made to realise that he can only become a part of society through performing such roles. The social system is in fact a system of roles which are defined by the negative and positive sanctions of law, custom and norms of behaviour.[30]

Burns argues that every successful 'staging' of a social role 'requires a preliminary

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[27] Wiegand, 'Interview I', pp. 75-94 (p. 87).
[28] Elizabeth Burns, *Theatricality: A Study of Convention in the Theatre and in Social Life* (London: Longman, 1972), p. 123.
[29] Ibid., p. 126.
[30] Ibid., p. 128.

*commitment* to the social occasion ..., a commitment which requires that the respective person maintain the shared typifications relevant to that occasion'.[31] This commitment to social role patterns, however, can be severely impaired by the disgust one may occasionally feel for one's inability to fulfil the requirements of a particular role model, i.e. the failure to meet what one believes to be the expectations of others. 'This disgust alienates [the person in question] from his role',[32] and makes the 'performed self' more distinguishable from the 'performer', a fact which, in turn, makes the person in such a situation convey more than just the 'motives, intentions and ultimate aims which conform to his self-image'.[33] As theatricality is thus not only an intrinsic part of everyday life, but may also cause the effects which can be observed in Fassbinder's films, the artificiality of the director's works appears to be fully explained by his direct interest in people.

While Fassbinder thus derives the theatrical artificiality, or as he himself calls it, his 'stylistic defamiliarisation' from the alienation, contradictions and hence artificiality of his characters, the content-form relationship in his works conforms to Mikhail Bakhtin's definition of stylisation as a method that uses 'stylized language as raw material; it is only in a stylized language, not one of his own, that the stylizer can speak about the subject directly'.[34] Thus, the original concept of defamiliarisation, which was designed by Brecht to dispense with identification and hermeneutics alike becomes part of a hermeneutic circle of alienation (*Entfremdung*) because, as Bjørn Ekmann puts it, 'die Begriffe Verfremdung und Entfremdung [haben] nicht nur lautlich miteinander zu tun':[35]

> Verfremdung steht in keinem konträren oder gar kontradiktorischen Gegensatzverhältnis zur Einfühlung, sondern beide setzen sich vielmehr gegenseitig voraus, stehen in einem dialektischen Verhältnis zueinander, wobei die Verfremdung die Einfühlung sogar steigern oder erst überhaupt ermöglichen kann, - auf jeden Fall aber beides zum Verstehensprozeß

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[31] Ibid., p. 124.
[32] Ibid., p. 137.
[33] Ibid., p. 130.
[34] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 362.
[35] Bjørn Ekmann, 'Fremdheit im ästhetischen Erlebnis', in *Fremdheit, Entfremdung, Verfremdung*, ed. by Bjørn Ekmann et al., Jahrbuch für internationale Germanistik Reihe A, 29 (Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt/Main, New York: Peter Lang, 1992), pp. 77-106 (p. 79).

und zum emotionalen Erlebnis zusammenwirkt.[36]

Under Fassbinder's aegis defamiliarisation (*Verfremdung*) turns out to be the adequate form for the depiction of human alienation (*Entfremdung*) and thus largely revokes the possibility which Brecht offers in his plays, namely to use one's rational faculties to step outside the system represented in the plays. Whilst Brecht is out to show the dynamic, the contradictions and the contingencies inherent in the alleged stasis of society, Fassbinder demonstrates the stasis and hopelessness in a social process of accelerated development. The subversion has been subverted and Fassbinder is in the midst of it. As the filmmaker therefore includes himself in the criticism he directs at the society of his day, the only utopia available to him is his own mourning over lost contingencies and dreams:[37] in Fassbinder's works, utopia is present as an absence.[38]

In the context of the present approach it is interesting to note that Fassbinder frequently defamiliarises his characters' will to 'play a role' in society by calling on stereotypical conventions of media representation. The theatricality of the characters thus often appears as the result of an insufficient appropriation of media conventions. This technique is particularly apparent in the early gangster films in which, as Fassbinder points out in one of his interviews, it is employed with deliberation.

> *Aber gibt es in Ihren frühen Filmen nicht so eine parodistische Note, die alles als Rollenverhalten sichtbar macht?*
> Parodistisch nicht. Es ist so, daß alle, da wo sie Gangster sind, Rollen spielen, weil es bei uns keine Gangster gibt.
> *Es gibt schon welche, aber die laufen nicht in solchen Anzügen herum.*
> Ja. Es sind die Rollen von Hollywood-Filmen.[39]

That this method was not only applied in the early films, but actually had a lasting impact on Fassbinder's subsequent work is acknowledged by Thomas Elsaesser when he recognises that 'Fassbinder never pretends to be giving us people as they

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[36] Ibid., p. 97.
[37] In his article 'Fassbinder, Rainer Werner', *Theater Heute*, Sonderheft (1972), 69-70 (p.70), Benjamin Henrichs quotes Fassbinder's attitude towards his characters: 'Es ist immer viel Trauer dabei, ganz bestimmt keine Verachtung.'
[38] In this sense I agree with Jane Shattuc on that 'Fassbinder looked forward to the subjectivity of the postmodern with the utopian logic of modernism'. - Shattuc, *Television, Tabloids and Tears*, p. 199.
[39] Wiegand, 'Interview I', pp. 75-94 (p. 85).

are, but as they represent themselves, be it as the image they have of themselves or the image they want to give to others'.[40] This attempt to make self-representation compensate for the loss of self is, besides the fact that 'all social reality in Fassbinder already bears the marks of the mass media',[41] one important reason for Elsaesser's conclusion that his films represent 'media worlds'. Consequently, Fassbinder draws on the representational forms and conventions of the mass media in different ways in order to convey the contradictions in his characters.

This kind of defamiliarising stylisation enables Fassbinder to convey in a rather effective way the messages which have been distilled from his personal experiences. For by stylistically exteriorising the subjective world of the characters Fassbinder forestalls easy identification and instead places the audience in a position which is analogous to that of his protagonists:[42] identification is still possible, however, it loses all its comfortable aspects so that the spectator is likely to feel just as alone watching the films as the characters obviously do in their world. As the director's stylisation thus provokes a kind of emotional engagement which is practically bound to ensue rational activity, it indeed makes the spectator, as the artist demands it, feel *and* think. This, in turn, indeed characterises Fassbinder's aesthetics as an aesthetics of experience (*Erfahrung*) insofar as experience may be defined as the 'lived' worked through by means of one's rational faculties.[43] Thus, proceeding from the artist's anti-ideological direct interest in people, the artistic principle of 'stylistic defamiliarisation' represents the heart of a cinema which aims to communicate personal experience.

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[40] Elsaesser, *Fassbinder's Germany*, p. 23.
[41] Ibid., p. 22.
[42] Tony Pipolo, 'Bewitched by the Holy Whore', *October* , 21 (1982), 83-112 (p. 108).
[43] Fassbinder himself put it this way: 'Die Leute wollen's nicht noch mal sehen, sondern sie wollen's nochmal erleben, aber nicht, indem sie einfach dasselbe nochmal sehen, sondern indem ihnen das, was sie sehen, die Möglichkeit gibt, es nochmal zu erleben...' - Wiegand, 'Interview I', pp. 75-94 (p. 89).

## I.1.3 The Idea of Personal Experience as a Media-Related Issue

Although Fassbinder never left any doubt about the fact that his main ambitions lay with the cinema, he, as has previously been mentioned, also worked for theatre and television. Thus he simultaneously worked in three media whose representations are not only characterised by the fact that they are audio-visual, but also by the fact that they realise themselves within the temporal dimension. Obviously, this proximity to real-life perception makes all of these media appear as apt for the conveyance of personal experience. However, notwithstanding these similarities, the three media are actually very different, a fact which Fassbinder was very much aware of. Thus the question arises how the different media relate to the directors' project of producing art on the basis of his personal experiences and in which way their defining characteristics may have been able to contribute to its development and/or its popularisation. As will be shown in the following, Fassbinder's involvement with each of the three media is due to a different reason, so that each of them occupies a different place and fulfils a different function according to its capacity to further the artistic project of creating works of art which are based on the director's own personal experiences.

Against the background of what he himself considered a deprived childhood Fassbinder was very much aware of how important personal experience is in order to free oneself from fears and activate one's imagination. The stories about Fassbinder's childhood and adolescence have repeatedly been quoted; the fact that the director often felt neglected as a child and tried to compensate for that by going to the cinema fuelled many of the biographical interpretations of his work.[44] This early solitary activity not only establishes a link between the medium of cinema and some kind of longing which cannot be fulfilled otherwise, but also accounts for Fassbinder's strong motivation to find a group of people with whom he would be able to integrate and gain the experience needed to avoid what he once called a second-hand life. In the context of the present approach to Fassbinder's work it is significant that the director found this group in the environment of a theatre, the Munich *Action Theater*.

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[44] Ronald Hayman, *Fassbinder - Film Maker* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984), p. 4.

For of all the audio-visual media the theatre is the only one which offers the possibility of personal interaction and lives off its representation on the stage.

That the involvement with the *Action Theater* was indeed the right choice for Fassbinder's purposes becomes clear as soon as one takes into account that this theatre was by no means an ordinary theatre, but an alternative theatre commune in the tradition of the American *Living Theater*. Fassbinder was struck by the sense of togetherness and the utopian longing among those involved and he felt the chance to get first-hand information about the power of human emotions and group dynamics: there was experimenting with alternative life styles and the will to work together, there was free sex and prostitution,[45] there was the search for a social utopia and the proximity to terrorist activities as well as powerful 'dramas' of jealousy, which literally put the physical health of some of the actors on the line.[46] There was the search for love, the will for art, the urge to protest against society and last but not least Fassbinder's own emerging will to dominate the group and impose his own ambitions. It is this first-hand knowledge about human desires and frustrations, needs and hopes, power play and submission which enabled Fassbinder to learn how to deal with, manipulate and eventually *direct* people.[47]

> Das Wichtigste für mich am Theater ist, mit den Menschen auszukommen, und ich halte mir da tatsächlich auch zugute, daß ich mit Menschen besser arbeiten kann als viele andere.[48]

Apparently, Fassbinder's involvement with the theatre commune is as much due to his search for personal involvement as it is due to his will to gain artistic experience.

However, besides the knowledge about the art of directing, the experience of the theatre commune also appears to have provided the basis for the definition of the director's preferred topic area, the exploitation of feelings. These experiences appear to have made Fassbinder aware of the extent to which the personal determines the political and vice versa. This interdependence is perhaps best described by the lines which the director put into the mouths of his own characters. Sister Gudrun's

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[45] Ibid., p. 34.
[46] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, pp. 18-19.
[47] Ibid., p. 23.
[48] Ibid., p. 51.

statement: 'Man macht sich nicht selbst kaputt, das macht die Ordnung, die die Menschen unter sich geschaffen haben' in the film *In a Year with 13 Moons* (1978) and Maria Braun's insight 'Wir sind alle aufeinander angewiesen' in *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1978) appear to summarise the perspective which puts Fassbinder's artistic renditions firmly in line with the slogan of the 1960s, 'the personal is political'. Thus, the mixed experiences Fassbinder had at the *Action Theater* and later at the *antiteater* appear to have helped him consider human interaction and relationships not only on a merely personal level, but also draw conclusions as to German history and society in general.

Finally, Fassbinder's *Action Theater* and *antiteater* background also makes itself felt in the fact that it was in the environment of these two theatres that the director met many of those actors who were to stay and work with him for most of his artistic career. In fact, the communal mode of artistic production in the environment of the theatre troupe may well have inspired a mode of artistic production in which personal and professional relationships became intertwined to a degree that they can hardly be separated from one another.[49] Regardless of whether Fassbinder worked for theatre, film or television, he usually took recourse to the human resources he found in his personal relationships. While *antiteater*-actors like Gunther Kaufmann, Kurt Raab, Irm Hermann and Ingrid Caven were to remain faithful to him throughout his artistic career, other actors like El Hedi ben Salem or Armin Meier only act in a small number of films; as they disappeared from Fassbinder's life they also disappeared from the screen. Thus, no matter for how many films the actors were cast, to see them on the screen always also means witnessing a part of Fassbinder's personal life. In this sense the actors' steady reappearance in or disappearance from the artist's films gives these films an almost documentary touch.

Whilst his theatre involvement thus represents the backbone of the director's

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[49] Throughout Fassbinder's career virtually all of his close friends and lovers took at some point part in his film production. Ingrid Caven, who Fassbinder married in 1970 features in many of his films such as *The Merchant of Four Seasons* (1971) and *Mother Küsters's Trip to Heaven* (1975); Fassbinder's long term lover Armin Meier likewise appears in *Mother Küsters's Trip to Heaven*, but also in *Chinese Roulette* (1976) and Fassbinder's contribution to *Germany in Autumn* (1977). Juliane Lorenz, with whom Fassbinder lived during his Berlin years (1979-1982), plays minor roles in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980) and *Lola* (1981).

artistic production, it is mainly in the cinema, the medium which he repeatedly called his preferred one,[50] that Fassbinder turns his personal experience into a groundwork for his artistic production. This choice does not appear to be an accident; for as the cinema is certainly able to provide a much larger audience than the theatre, it is also the medium in whose anonymity of darkness the spectator is invited to sit back and sink into a daydream of more or less conscious desires, a fact which makes this medium appear as most apt for the conveyance of personal experience. Against this background it is not surprising that Fassbinder not only prefers the cinema to the theatre but also to television. For as television's appeal to human emotions is decidedly less powerful than the cinema's, television does well to specialise in entertainment programmes:

> Im Fernsehen sieht man eigentlich ein so breit gefächertes Unterhaltungsprogramm, daß die Leute, die unterhalten sein wollen, jeden Abend sicherlich etwas finden. Dazu, glaube ich, brauchen sie nicht ins Kino zu gehen. Ins Kino geht man wirklich, um neue *Erfahrungen* zu machen.[51] [my italics - K.U.M.]

Although it appears that Fassbinder rather prematurely identifies his own cinema with cinema in general, his comparison between television's and cinema's mode of representation allows him to envisage a certain division of labour between the two media and thus define his aesthetic standpoint in the context of an increasingly differentiated mediascape.

So, if the theatre is the place where personal experience is most readily available and the cinema the medium which is most apt to pass it on to the audience, contemporary television appears to be the least welcoming medium for the realisation of personal works of art. For television's focus on entertainment not only largely forestalls the conveyance of personal experience, but even results in a flood of reality-replacing representations. As the medium's representations thus tend to assume the status of a kind of make-shift reality, they alienate the audience from the

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[50] In an interview with Wolfgang Limmer Fassbinder professes: 'Film hat mich also ohnehin mehr interessiert.' Wolfgang Limmer, *Rainer Werner Fassbinder* (Reinbek b. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1981), p. 64. A similar statement can be found in Fassbinder's essay 'Die Städte des Menschen und seine Seele', in Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *Filme befreien den Kopf*, ed. by Michael Töteberg (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1984), pp. 84-85.

[51] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 154.

reality of their own lives.

> Speziell in dieser Mediengesellschaft, in der wir leben, ist es ja so, daß wir das Gefühl haben, irgendwie passiert das Leben woanders. Und das ist das Traurige, daß das Medium Fernsehen - womit unheimlich viel möglich wäre - letztlich nicht positiv benutzt, sondern eher als phantasietötendes Unterdrückungsmittel eingesetzt wird.[52]

Although Fassbinder is prepared to give credit to the medium's technical possibilities, he blames television's conventions of representation for not using them in order to sharpen the audience's awareness of the reality of their own lives. Consequently, the way in which television is produced is directly opposed to Fassbinder's project as it suppresses the active impulses in people and thereby increases their sense of alienation.

However, although his preoccupation with personal experience makes Fassbinder view television in a mainly critical way, considered in relation to the printed medium of the book it still holds a great potential. For just like film, the equally audio-visual medium of television rejects the book's predominantly rational approach to reality and instead seeks directly to appeal to the emotional impulses.

> [I]ch glaube nicht, daß Theorien für mich als Fernsehzuschauer wichtig sind, sondern nur als Leser von Büchern. Als Fernseh- oder Kinozuschauer ist einfach für mich wichtiger, daß in mir das aktiviert wird, was auch Träume aktivieren können oder so.[53]

Apparently, although the project of the personal film was originally defined in opposition to television entertainment, its opposition to television's mode of representation is not a matter of principle, as the two technical media have essential characteristics in common. Fassbinder's decision to go for down-to-earth personal experiences rather than high-flung theoretical or ideological constructs thus appears to be an effective strategy to awaken the imagination of an audience who are used to television's mode of representing day-to-day reality.

It is on this basis that Fassbinder nonetheless appreciates the advantages of television. Television may contribute to the general tendency of increasing social and

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[52] Limmer, *Rainer Werner Fassbinder*, p. 59.
[53] Wiegand, 'Interview I', pp. 75-94 (p. 90).

self-alienation insofar as it produces images which give the viewer the impression that the meaning of life is more likely to be found on television than in his own life, however, its audio-visual mode of representation lets Fassbinder sense what the medium could possibly accomplish if its social implementation was changed. For the electronic audio-visual representation of television not only facilitates an emotional immediacy which comes close to that of the cinema, but also offers a vast audience. Hence Fassbinder's opposition to television is by no means categorical, a circumstance which is underscored by the fact that he produced his first television film as early as 1969. Consequently, Fassbinder considers television as a medium-institution which can, although it contributes to social alienation in today's society, be made use of to promote the cause of diminishing alienation by having it broadcast programmes which are in keeping with his own aesthetic approach of personal experience.

Fassbinder's view of the different media is determined by his will to create works of art which are based on personal experiences. Accordingly, he devises a gradation of the media according to their capacity to support this project. Whilst television's mode of representation tends to obliterate the idea of personal experience and the cinema can be used to reinstate it, it is certainly the personal interaction in the theatre which facilitates the actual acquisition of personal experience. However, just as his theatre involvement not only provided Fassbinder with the experience of personal interaction, but also with inspiration and many of the material and human resources he needed in order to bring the conveyance of personal experience to perfection in the cinema, Fassbinder's attitude towards television is far from being entirely negative. Although predominantly viewed as a medium, which alienates people from their own lives insofar as it discourages them from making their own experiences, television remains a medium to be conquered.[54] For it offers not only

[54] One aspect of present-day television, which appears to support Fassbinder's hopes for a different social implementation of television, may be found in the fact that television, as John Fiske has put it by drawing on Roland Barthes' well-known term, produces a 'producerly text': '[T]he producerly text shows many of the characteristics ... [of a] radical text: it draws attention to its own textuality, it does not produce a singular reading subject but one that is involved in the process of representation rather than a victim of it, it plays with the difference between the representation and the real as a producerly equivalent of the writerly mixing of documentary and fictional modes, and replaces the pleasures of identification and familiarity with more cognitive pleasures of participation and production.' – John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 95.

many of the qualities required for the conveyance of works of art based on personal experience, but also the audience and publicity necessary for the success of this project.

## I.2

## The Interplay of the Media - The Core of Fassbinder's Aesthetics

### I.2.1 The Internalisation of the Other as an Aesthetic Structure - On the Aesthetic Function of Media Interplay in Fassbinder's Works

So far it should have become clear that it is not necessary to call upon any of the different classifications of Fassbinder's work in order to explain its artistic peculiarities. Instead, a reference to the director's own personal experience and knowledge of human nature has turned out as quite sufficient as an explanation for the stylistic principle at work in his œuvre. His anti-ideological standpoint which, as his early play testifies, Fassbinder was certain about as early as 1966, allows the artist to look closely at people's behaviour and take their internal conflicts, social alienation, and rather schizoid condition as a basis for the 'stylistic defamiliarisation' by means of theatrical artificiality. However, Fassbinder not only worked for the medium of film, but also for the media of theatre and television, two media which relate to the idea of personal experience in ways which are quite different from that of the cinema. Thus the question arises if Fassbinder sticks to this artistic approach in the work for the other two media and, if so, how he manages to put it into practice. Is there an overarching artistic principle which is able to secure the conveyance of the character's internalisation of the social other regardless of the medium used in each particular case?

It is not only in the cinema that Fassbinder externalises the characters'

internalisation of the social other in order to establish his double perspective. In fact, his entire artistic output is marked by this approach. Whilst in the cinema the externalisation is primarily achieved by the implementation of theatrical means, in the theatre it is the employment of predominantly filmic means which is to achieve this effect. In television, then, the externalisation of the characters' states of mind mainly rests on the transposition of that theatrical film aesthetics which the director developed in the cinema. Conversely, the experience of television production also had aesthetic repercussions on his work for the cinema. Finally, the transposition of artistic means is not restricted to an exchange between the aesthetic approaches which the director himself designed for the different media, but also includes devices which are otherwise typical of the respective media. Thus, although he neglects the role and impact which television has within this, I therefore basically agree with Benjamin Henrichs when he calls Fassbinder's works 'Bastarde der Form: Kreuzungen aus Film und Theater'.[55] Media interplay enables Fassbinder to create new aesthetic possibilities and thus break with conventional forms of artistic expression.

It is this transposition of aesthetic means from one medium to the other which enables Fassbinder in all of the three audio-visual media to make apparent what is normally invisible, i.e. to aesthetically exteriorise the characters' internalisation of the social other. Thus, the reciprocal exchange of artistic devices creates an aesthetic structure which parallels the psychological disposition of Fassbinder's characters. Just as the characters are informed by the social other, so any one particular medium used for the representation of their interaction incorporates elements which are alien to it, no matter what the individual configuration of transposed means may be like. The result is a correspondence between the two structures of internalisation on the works' thematic and formal levels which enables Fassbinder to produce an œuvre of extraordinary thematic consistency on the one hand and use a wide variety of aesthetic forms, genres and media on the other. The deliberate taking advantage of the aesthetic possibilities offered by the interplay of the media in order to represent the characters' psychological disposition thus suggests a way in which Fassbinder's

[55] Benjamin Henrichs, 'Fassbinder, Rainer Werner', *Theater Heute*, (Sonderheft 1972), 69-70 (p. 70).

entire work, that is his work for the cinema as well as his work for theatre and television, can be conceptualised under the scope of its aesthetic generation.

As a result the aesthetics of Fassbinder's work is not only marked by a hermeneutics of alienation in which, as Ekmann has suggested, defamiliarisation (*Verfremdung*) turns out to be the appropriate form for the depiction of alienation (*Entfremdung*), but, paradoxically, also by a hermeneutics of deconstruction. For in Fassbinder's works the basic hermeneutic agreement between the parts and the whole is realised as an agreement between two disagreements. As the social standards and values which have been internalised in social intercourse disagree with the characters' wish for emancipation and happiness,[56] the artistic means used for the depiction of their dilemma do, insofar as they have been transposed from other media, deconstruct the representational conventions of the respective media. Thus, in the context of Fassbinder's work hermeneutics and deconstruction do not represent principles which are opposed to one another, but rather complement one another. Fassbinder's mournful-subversive view of his characters relies on the agreement between the deconstruction of the characters' moral integrity on the one hand and the deconstruction of established media conventions on the other.

Before a number of Fassbinder's works will be selected to be analysed in the following, it seems important to shed some light on the way in which the director conceived of, and eventually made use of media interplay in each of the different media. What kind of strategy does he use when he transposes aesthetic means from one medium to the other, what are the means he selects on the basis of this strategy and what is the effect? If there is such a strategy, is it valid for Fassbinder's entire artistic output or did the director develop it further in order to move on artistically? How do transposed aesthetic devices work within the aesthetic environment of a different medium? Is there a particular meaning that is transposed along with these devices? And if so, how do these meanings relate to and influence the message of a

[56] This parallel between Derrida's theory of deconstruction as outlined in his book *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) and Fassbinder's aesthetic approach may be justified on the grounds that Derrida too is interested in the deconstruction of identity on the basis of a notion of internalisation, namely the internalisation of 'arche-writing'. This entails what he calls the 'becoming-absent and the becoming-unconscious' of the subject (p. 69) which is so strikingly obvious about Fassbinder's characters.

particular work as a whole? Of course, it is not until after we have analysed some of Fassbinder's works in detail that we will come anywhere near a definite answer to these questions. For the time being, however, I want to concentrate on the question of how Fassbinder envisaged the use of media interplay in the three audio-visual media of theatre, cinema, and television in order to lay the foundations for such an analysis.

### I.2.2 Fassbinder's Use of Media Interplay: The Phases of Aesthetic Reciprocity

It is right from the beginning of his artistic career that Fassbinder based his artistic productions on the principle of media interplay. Looking back on his early productions in 1974 he pronounced:

> Anfangs war das ziemlich extrem bei mir. Ich habe im Theater so inszeniert, als wäre es Film, und habe dann den Film so gedreht, als wär's Theater; das hab ich ziemlich stur gemacht.[57]

As far as Fassbinder's early plays are concerned the application of this working method is so obtrusive that it can hardly be missed. It is above all the extensive use of the principle of montage, as it was developed in the field of film production, which contributes to the filmic character of the early plays. In Fassbinder's plays this principle is implemented in a way that it not only interrupts the linearity of the traditional dramatic curve, but even forestalls it in the first place. In fact, most of the plays Fassbinder wrote between 1968 and 1971 consist of a series of scenes which are not only unusually self-enclosed but also highly repetitive in content. As the plays *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*, *Anarchy in Bavaria* (Anarchie in Bayern), *Werewolf* (Werwolf), and *Blood on the Cat's Neck* (Blut am Hals der Katze) exemplify, this approach to the theatre often results in model plays which are designed to exhibit certain social patterns of behaviour.

Whilst the 'stylistic defamiliarisation' in the early plays predominantly rests on the structural principle of montage, the films of this period, *Love Is Colder than*

[57] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 51.

*Death* (Liebe ist kälter als der Tod) *Katzelmacher* and *Why does Herr R. Run Amok?* (all 1969), translate this approach into a montage of sequence shots. This, in turn, gives these films a highly theatrical air. More than any other kind of editing, sequence shots force the actor to play his role like in the theatre, i.e. not cut up into portions of acting, but each scene in its entirety. The theatricality of this effect is additionally supported by an extremely slow, choreographed acting style which cannot conceal its origin in the *antiteater* performances. Although this initial idea of aesthetic reciprocity between theatre and cinema characterises not only the rendition of Fassbinder's early works, but was actually to have a lasting impact on his cinema work, the emphasis on media interplay was revoked: 'Quite soon, though, I was looking for something more purely filmic'.[58] In the process of this search the artist discarded his early films as too 'private' and 'elitist' and began to see himself 'in einem Bezug zu einer Umwelt ... und nicht nur in Bezug zu mir selber'.[59]

Ultimately, it was his 1970 discovery of the Hollywood melodrama of the 1950s and the melodramas of Douglas Sirk in particular which was to help Fassbinder elaborate a more filmic approach to the cinema. This does not mean that Fassbinder revoked the theatricality of his earlier aesthetic approach entirely, however, it was now integrated into the generic framework of melodrama. Theatrical means are no longer applied to purport a world of such coldness that the characters can hardly move any more. Instead, as Fassbinder begins to be more interested in the emotional world of his characters, their application is modified in a way that they support the conveyance of the characters' emotions. As a consequence, the camera becomes more mobile, the editing is, although it is still decidedly slower than in classical filmic narration, accelerated and makes use of devices as well-established as shot / reverse shots. Moreover, Fassbinder also livens up the images by making their composition more complex. Careful arrangements of the characters within space indicate their emotional relationships. Thus Fassbinder develops a visual style which combines the aesthetic austerity of the early films with the emotional interest of melodrama.

It is interesting to note that the new approach to cinematic representation was

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[58] Tony Rayns, 'Forms of Address', *Sight and Sound*, 44/1 (1974/75), 3-6 (p. 3).
[59] Wiegand, 'Interview I', pp. 75-94 (p. 88).

first tried out in the theatre. The most striking example for the exploration of the possibilities offered by the melodramatic genre is the 1971 play *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant). For this play was developed from the question: 'Wieviel ist von der Realität eines Gefühls (der Liebe, der Eifersucht, des Hasses) mit welchen Mitteln des Theaters darstellbar?'[60] As this approach to melodrama cannot hide its experimental overtones, it becomes quite clear that Fassbinder's swing towards a more melodramatic theatre is by no means a return to conventionality. Thus it is not surprising that Fassbinder does not stop at this point of his aesthetic development, but continues his quest for theatre's aesthetic possibilities. The direction, in which this search eventually leads, is indicated by his last play *Garbage, the City and Death* (Der Müll, die Stadt und der Tod). For in this play the director combines the two previous approaches to the theatre to create a considerable clash between the melodramatic genre of the bourgeois *Trauerspiel* and the impossibility of social transcendence in today's society.

In 1972 Fassbinder produced his first television series, *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* (Acht Stunden sind kein Tag). Unlike previous productions for television this production was to have a decisive influence on the way he rendered his works for the electronic mass medium.[61] Fassbinder took the representational conventions of television into consideration and on this basis devised an aesthetic differentiation between his cinema and his television films. However, at this stage there is nothing original about the director's differentiation; it largely echoes well-established conventions of television representation:

> Beim Fernsehen benutzt man weitaus mehr Nahaufnahmen als beim Film, außerdem ist Zoom ziemlich gebräuchlich beim Fernsehen, während das auf einer Leinwand recht störend wirken kann. Da wählt

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[60] Iden, 'Der Eindruck-Macher', pp. 17-28 (pp. 24-25).

[61] Between 1969 and 1972 Fassbinder appears to have considered television a mere extension of cinema. There is no indication that Fassbinder took the specific conditions of televisual representation into consideration. On the contrary, in the periodical *film + fernsehen* he wrote in 1970: 'Ich weiß nicht, wo die größere Dringlichkeit liegt: daß der Film ein größeres Publikum erreicht oder daß er genau die Wirkung hat, die er im Kino hat. Im Grund ist das Kino natürlich besser für den Film. Ich sage nur, daß in der momentanen Situation das Fernsehen besser ist, weil es nicht viel Unterschied ist, ob ein Film im 'Theatiner' läuft ... wo die Leinwand auch winzig ist, oder im Fernsehen; und weil ich in der Kinolandschaft nicht gegen Frau-Wirtin-Filme oder gegen Pauker-Filme konkurrieren kann, das geht nicht, weil die Kinos verstopft sind mit diesen Filmen.' - Peter Berling, *Die 13 Jahre des Rainer Werner Fassbinder* (Bergisch Gladbach: Lübbe, 1992), p. 144.

> man lieber einen travelling anstelle eines Zooms. Beim Fernsehen arbeitet man sehr viel direkter, während man beim Film stärker atmosphärisch arbeitet.[62]

These ideas about media specificity make it quite clear that Fassbinder began to draw a fine line between his films for the cinema and his made-for-TV films. That this distinction between cinema and television production largely echoes established representational conventions does not refute his interest in the media's aesthetic exchange, but merely indicates how keen Fassbinder was to use television for the popularisation of his personal issues and concerns.

That Fassbinder did indeed not stop being interested in the artistic possibilities which the aesthetic exchange between the two technical media has on offer becomes obvious in the way he envisaged his subsequent cinema work. For although the cinema films Fassbinder made in the early 1970s cannot deny the aesthetic influence of Douglas Sirk's Hollywood melodramas, the aesthetic consideration of television in the wake of *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* had repercussions on his cinema films, too. In 1972 Fassbinder projected a reciprocal exchange of artistic devices between television and cinema similar to the reciprocity between theatre and cinema envisaged before.

> [I]ch will zukünftig meine Erfahrungen vom Fernsehen beim Filmen anwenden, genauso wie ich früher meine Erfahrungen vom Theater auf den Film übertragen habe. Ich könnte mir halt vorstellen, daß die Filme, die ich zukünftig fürs Kino drehe, nicht mehr ganz so pessimistisch sind.[63]

Although it concerns the conceptual level rather than the use of concrete artistic devices, this statement clearly witnesses Fassbinder's intention to include television into the project of aesthetic exchange between the media. As this statement is followed by a brief outline of his next cinema film, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (*Angst essen Seele auf*, 1973), a production which has repeatedly been called a remake of Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), this film appears to play an important role in Fassbinder's endeavour to situate his own cinema in relation to those institutions

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[62]Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 45.
[63] Ibid., p. 46.

which predominate in the world of audio-visual representation: the Hollywood cinema and broadcast television.

It appears impossible to name the exact date when Fassbinder's interest in the transposition of television's representational means into his cinema films subsided. However, there is no doubt that by 1978 Fassbinder had turned around to put more emphasis on a clear distinction between his cinema and television films. In an interview given in 1980, Fassbinder refers to his independently produced films *In a Year with 13 Moons* (In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden, 1978) and *The Third Generation* (Die dritte Generation, 1979) as prime examples for the new, aesthetically more radical direction in his cinema work.

> Ich würde bei einem Kinofilm sehr viel mehr auch für Schockwirkungen plädieren [...] Das hat nichts mit Gefälligkeit gegenüber dem [Fernseh-] Publikum zu tun, sondern einfach damit, daß man erzählerische Mittel benutzt, die es zuerst einmal nicht abschrecken. Das hat damit zu tun, daß man einen Konsensus schafft zwischen dem Werk - oder dem Nicht-Werk - und dem Publikum.[64]

As the aesthetic differentiation between cinema and television now runs along the lines of shock and consensus, its focus is no longer the application of concrete artistic devices. Instead it has become a much more fundamental question as it has moved up to the conceptual level, i.e. that level on which the two media's cross-fertilisation was originally envisaged.

Eventually, this move towards a more radical cinema aesthetics was not without a certain impact on Fassbinder's work for television. For if the new experience of television production in 1972/73 pulled Fassbinder's film art in the direction of television aesthetics, it is now the growing confidence about his cinema aesthetics that transforms televisual enunciation. A primary example for the new approach to television production is the 14-part television series *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, which Fassbinder produced in 1979/80. In this series Fassbinder employed many of those aesthetic devices he had previously developed in his cinema work. Accordingly, he complained about the widespread criticism at the time of its first transmission in a way which leaves no doubt about his new approach to

[64] Ibid., pp. 153/54.

television production:

> Die haben es als Fernsehfilm gesehen und nicht als das, was ich für richtig finde, daß man fürs Fernsehen im Grunde mit den gleichen ästhetischen Mitteln arbeiten muß wie fürs Kino.[65]

Obviously, by 1979 Fassbinder decided not to make television as an 'insider' any longer, but as a filmmaker who offers his art to a wider public.

When all these statements about the aesthetic relationships between the media in Fassbinder's work are taken together, a fine network of cross-media relationships emerges which gives the director's work a considerable amount of aesthetic consistency. This does not mean that the director's attitude towards the different media is static; on the contrary, the repeated revision facilitates a subdivision of his work according to different aesthetic phases and periods. Fassbinder not only changed along with his characters as he pointed out in one of his interviews,[66] he also changed along with his production experience in the different media. Therefore it seems that Fassbinder refers to his own aesthetic development when he, shortly before his death in 1982, replied to Wim Wenders's *Chambre 666* question as to whether or not the cinema has a future in the face of television's challenge:

> Die Problematik eines Kinos, das immer mehr aussieht wie Fernsehen, ist eigentlich nicht mehr gegeben. Das war vielleicht so in den Jahren 1974 bis 1977; aber heute hat sich doch überall auf der Welt eine bestimmte Kinoästhetik, eine individuelle Kinoästhetik von einzelnen Filmregisseuren herausgebildet, die vom Fernsehen unabhängig ist. Daß das Fernsehen in allen Ländern - in manchen mehr, in andern weniger - an Produktionen mitbeteiligt ist, kann diesen Regisseuren mit ihrer Ästhetik nicht mehr schaden. Wer sich doch davon beeinflussen läßt, wäre selber schuld.[67]

This statement appears to be the profession made by an artist who considers himself beyond the temptations of television, somebody who, after a certain period of aesthetic 'weakness', deems himself free of its influence. If Fassbinder indeed talks about himself here, then he himself suggests a subdivision of his work into different

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[65] Ibid., p. 182.
[66] Ibid., p. 122.
[67] Fassbinder, *Filme befreien den Kopf*, p. 130.

aesthetic phases and periods according to the changing aesthetic role the different media play in his work, a suggestion which will be explored in the following.

### I.2.3 Between Aesthetic Radicalism and Audience Considerations. The Tactics of Fassbinder's Media Interplay

Although the interplay of the media clearly provides the aesthetic basis for Fassbinder's project of personalising art, the director is, as his consideration of the three media's varying abilities to promote the cause of the 'personal film' has already shown, very much aware of the different framework conditions in each of the three media. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that in spite of the manifold aesthetic exchanges between the different media, Fassbinder nonetheless differentiates between them when it comes to the working methods he applies in the different media. This differentiation appears to be best described by the two main co-ordinates of Fassbinder's artistic production: artistic experimentation on the one hand and audience considerations on the other. The in each case concrete relationship between these two factors demarcates his works for the theatre from those for the cinema and from his television productions. Consequently, it is in the different ways in which Fassbinder seeks to strike a balance between his aesthetic radicalism and his considerations of audience expectancies that he takes media differences into account and differentiates between his aesthetic approaches.

This differentiation between the approaches to the three different media becomes quite obvious as soon as one considers Fassbinder's comparison between the working method he applies in the theatre and those he reserves for the technical media:

> In the theatre I am interested in an idea, but I'm not interested in audiences. But how one can work with as technical an instrument as a video camera and ignore the audience is beyond my comprehension.[68]

[68] Norbert Sparrow, 'I Let the Audience Feel and Think: Interview with Rainer Werner Fassbinder', *Cineaste* 2 (1977), 20-21 (p. 21).

More than the technical media, the theatre is considered a space for experimentation, a space in which the artist is allowed to give prevalence to his own aesthetic ideas over audience considerations. In a similar vein, when he was asked in 1971/72 whether his television productions are aesthetically different from his cinema films, Fassbinder replied: 'Wenn man für ein großes Publikum arbeiten will, muß sich die Form natürlich ändern'.[69] Consequently, there is a gradation of aesthetic radicalism at work in Fassbinder's artistic output which is directly related to what the audience can be expected to take: the larger the audience, the more Fassbinder is prepared to make aesthetic compromises; the smaller the audience, the more he sticks to his own, 'radical ideas'.

This, however, is only a general observation which needs to be modified according to Fassbinder's changing attitude towards the various media. For the gradation of aesthetic radicalism merely provides the basis for what could be called a 'conceptual diffusion' of aesthetic means and concepts from the theatre to the cinema and on to television, gradually radicalising the works for the technical media, too. This progressive movement of the ideas and aesthetic means, which Fassbinder predominantly developed in the theatre, can be described in terms of the filmmaker's appropriation of one particular tradition: Antonin Artaud's idea of a theatre of cruelty. The director's own references to Artaud appear to be a reliable source for this. In Fassbinder's work for the theatre, Artaud is present right from the beginning;[70] in his work for the cinema it is not before 1976 that his name appears under a quotation from his writings at the beginning of the film *Satan's Brew* (Satansbraten). In 1981 Artaud's name finally arrived in the medium of television as the director decided to quote Artaud's *The Theatre and its Double* at length in his documentary about the Cologne theatre festival *Theater der Welt*, *Theatre in Trance* (Theater in Trance).

This 'conceptual diffusion' of an aesthetics of disturbance and irritation from the artist's theatre work through to television did not take place in an empty space but was carried out under the specific production conditions of the respective media.

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[69] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 45.

[70] Yaak Karsunke, 'anti-teatergeschichte: Die Anfänge', in *Rainer Werner Fassbinder* ed. by Peter W. Jansen and Wolfram Schütte (Frankfurt/ Main: Fischer, 1982), pp. 7-16 (pp. 8-9).

Thus Fassbinder's will to popularise his personal concerns and draw audiences across into his universe met objective impediments. As the director depended on the approval of television officials and funding bodies for financial support not all of his cinema and television projects could be realised.[71] For these bodies allocate money according to a project's presumed popularity with the audience and their own cultural and political guidelines. So, if one considers the production history of Fassbinder's work for the technical media, it is not only striking that some of his projects never materialised, but also that many of his films were produced under most precarious financial circumstances.[72] Consequently, if it took Fassbinder more than ten years to carry elements of his rather radical theatre work into cinema and television then this is not only due to his own considerations of the different media and their audiences, but also to his working conditions at the time.

Notwithstanding this objective factor, it is striking that the dates of the gradual advance of Artaud's name from the theatre through to television roughly coincide with the dates of Fassbinder's deliberate retreat from the aesthetics of television in the cinema (1977/78) and in television (1980). Thus, the observation of moderation and 'consensus', which Fassbinder initially demanded of his television work, is not so much the result of an attempt at finding the right way of addressing the audience than of first finding and approaching a potential audience. Evidently, the differentiation of aesthetic strategies for the different media was not intended to be permanent; the director did take pains to push his work in a more radical direction, no matter for which of the three media he worked. Therefore it appears to be debatable whether melodrama indeed supplies the core concept for the description of Fassbinder's aesthetics as Jane Shattuc suggests when she argues that it is

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[71] For example, the three final parts of *Eight Hours Are not a Day* (1972) were never produced as the West German television station WDR came under pressure from trade unions and employers alike because of Fassbinder's development of the story-line. In 1976 Fassbinder's project of the Zwerenz adaptation *Die Erde ist unbewohnbar wie der Mond* (The Earth is as Uninhabitable as the Moon) was turned down because of suspicion of anti-Semitism which was raised in the theatre scandal around the play *Der Müll, die Stadt und der Tod* (Garbage the City and Death). Shortly after that Fassbinder's projected adaptation of Gustav Freytag's novel *Soll und Haben* (Debit and Credit) as a television series was turned down for the same reasons.

[72] For more information about the financial aspect of Fassbinder's films see Corinna Brocher's interview with Fassbinder in: Barbara Bronnen, Corinna Brocher, *Die Filmemacher: Der neue deutsche Film nach Oberhausen* (Munich, Gütersloh, Vienna: Bertelsmann, 1973), and Peter Berling's biography *Die 13 Jahre des Rainer Werner Fassbinder*.

Fassbinder's appropriation of the melodramatic genre which 'finally unites the violent visceral Artaudian tradition and pop art's playfulness'.[73] Rather, it seems to be in the light of an Artaudian aesthetics of disturbance and irritation that Fassbinder's œuvre takes on some form of, if not unity, then, direction.

### I.2.4 The Works Selected for Aesthetic Analysis and the Structure of the Present Thesis

It is this combination of Fassbinder's changing attitude towards the different media's representational conventions and the progressive radicalisation of his artistic output which is to set the framework for the present approach to his œuvre. Fassbinder's work will not be considered in its entirety; nor can criteria like the fame or financial success of individual works of art play a major role here. Also the fact that Fassbinder occasionally returns to aesthetic patterns which he previously appeared to have discarded, e.g. after the production of his most radical films *In a Year with 13 Moons* and *The Third Generation* he returned to the more easy-going melodramatic approach to the cinema in *Lola* (1981), cannot be considered in detail. Rather, taking Fassbinder at his own word(s), I have selected one representative work for each distinguishable phase in his work for the different media in order to undertake an attempt at defining the outer aesthetic limits, the extremes of each particular aesthetic direction on the basis of the director's implementation of media interplay. Thus each of the remaining parts of this thesis consists of two or three analyses of different works by Fassbinder, each of which is to represent a particular direction or tendency in his work for the respective medium.

The analyses of Fassbinder's theatre work in the subsequent part of this work concentrate on two plays: an early one, *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* (1969), and Fassbinder's last play, *Garbage, the City and Death* (1975). While analysing these plays we will ask for the selection of transposed means they comprise, the way these

[73] Shattuc, *Television, Tabloids and Tears*, p. 99.

means are implemented, and the function they fulfil within the whole, i.e. the way in which they contribute to the plays' message. We will ask whether media interplay in the plays is indeed confined to the transposition of filmic means as Fassbinder pointed out in one of his interviews, and how theatrical and transposed devices work together within a conception of theatre that runs along the lines of a rather Artaudian aesthetics of disturbance. On this basis we will also ask for the aesthetic differences between the two plays and thus attempt to derive conclusions as to Fassbinder's aesthetic development in the theatre. The question will be posed whether the more dramatic structure of *Garbage, the City and Death* indeed means a return to more traditional concepts of theatre, or if the new configuration of theatrical and transposed devices just gives a new twist to Fassbinder's experimental theatre work.

Part three consists of three chapters each of which deals with one of Fassbinder's cinema films: *Katzelmacher* (1969), *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (1973), and *In a Year with 13 Moons* (1978), thus giving an impression of the three identifiable stages in the development of his cinema aesthetics. Whilst the analysis of Fassbinder's second full-length feature film *Katzelmacher* will give an impression of the aesthetics of the early *antiteater* films, the analysis of *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* will provide a perspective of the first modification of the original concept of media interplay, a modification which takes place within the generic framework of melodrama and under the influence of the experiences Fassbinder had during the production of his first television series. The third analysis, whose subject is the cinema film *In a Year with 13 Moons*, will indicate Fassbinder's further development in the second half of the 1970s, when the aesthetic approach to the cinema was revised again and redefined in terms of a more radical, rather Artaudian cinema of cruelty. Besides the obvious link between Fassbinder's cinema aesthetics and the various theatrical traditions, I will also shed some light on the question whether or not the aesthetic interplay between cinema and television, which Fassbinder first conceived of in the context of the production of *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, is restricted to the films of that period. Again, the exploration of the transposed artistic means will include an analysis of their implementation as well as their function within the wholeness of the respective films.

Part four is devoted to Fassbinder's television work. The two works selected for the present analysis of Fassbinder's work are the two multi-part television series *Eight Hours Are not a Day* (1972) and *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980). The mere format of the two works, the television series, indicates Fassbinder's readiness seriously to engage with the conventions of the electronic mass medium. While analysing these series I will therefore concentrate on the balance the filmmaker seeks to strike between the artistic approach he developed in the cinema and the aesthetic requirements of television. Consequently, I will attempt to separate the filmic from the televisual devices in order to analyse their application and the aesthetic function they fulfil in relation to the work's message as well as in relation to the applied medium. Ultimately, this exploration will be aimed at substantiating the director's own statements as to the relationship between his own cinema work and television's aesthetic requirements. Thus, Fassbinder's initial eagerness to learn from the electronic medium will be set against his endeavour to popularise aspects of his cinema aesthetics in the mass medium in 1980.

The conclusion of this work will summarise Fassbinder's position in relation to the different media and the way in which the director made use of them. Once the two main directions in the implementation of media interplay have been identified and linked up with their aesthetic purpose, a reference to McLuhan's theory of the media will show that the correspondence between two structures of internalisation, as it can be found on the formal and thematic levels of Fassbinder's works, is by no means a matter of chance. An overview over the different ways in which this correspondence is realised in the three different media will make obvious that Fassbinder not only mixes the various media's devices, but that the interplay between the media also leads to a new differentiation between his work for the three media. Once the dialectics between unity and diversity in Fassbinder's work has thus been discussed, some light will be shed on the question in which way this affects the way in which the audience are positioned by the director's works. Finally, the specific way in which Fassbinder has the various media interact will help position his work within the history of the aesthetic interaction between the media.

# Part II

# The Aesthetics of Fassbinder's Work for the Theatre

## II.1

## Theatre in the Modern Mediascape - The Development of Fassbinder's Theatre Aesthetics

Right form the beginning of his artistic career Fassbinder's interest in the medium of the theatre is determined by his will to experiment with different artistic strategies and devices. In the theatre of the 20th century this approach is not unusual; the severe pressure from the competition with the modern, technical media forced the old medium to open its gates for all kinds of aesthetic experiments. However, what is rather unusual perhaps is the fact that Fassbinder came to the theatre from the medium of film: before the young artist entered the *Action Theater* commune in August 1967 he had already shot three short films. Thus familiar with all the different filmic techniques from the use of camera angles to the editing process, the theatre must have appeared to him like a vast fertile field that was just waiting to be injected with the new aesthetic forms that had been developed in the modern, technical media. It is on the basis of such an exploration of theatre's ability to aesthetically interact with the modern media that Fassbinder sought to identify the medium's aesthetic possibilities in order to realise his own artistic project of the representation of the exploitation of feelings in today's social reality.

When Fassbinder first visited the small theatre commune of the Munich *Action Theater* in August 1967 he was immediately enthused by its kind of 'Intensivtheater, das einen ganz direkten Kontakt zwischen der Bühne und dem Publikum suchte'.[1] On the eve of the political events of 1968, this off-off-scene theatre, which had been started in 1966 by Horst Söhnlein and Ursula Strätz, set out

[1] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 16.

to develop aesthetic forms which would do justice to the sensibility which had come about in the general atmosphere of political protest at the time. This means first and foremost that conventional theatricality was reduced to a minimum; instead the performances had a happening-like character, the actors did not wear costumes, decor was hardly used and the text had rarely been fixed in a written form. As a result, the *Action Theater*'s performance of Brecht's *Antigonemodell* (which Fassbinder attended) resembled, as one reviewer put it rather critically, a 'zentralafrikanischen Fete' rather than 'einer sinnreichen, kollektiven Emotionsäußerung'.[2] According to Fassbinder, however, the happening-like character of the performances was so effective that 'zwischen den Schauspielern und dem Publikum [etwas] entstand ... wie Trance, etwas wie eine kollektive Sehnsucht nach revolutionärer Utopie'.[3] Thus swept along, it took Fassbinder merely three days to involve himself in the *Antigone* performance. The *Action Theater*'s subsequent productions of Georg Büchner's *Leonce and Lena* (Leonce und Lena) and Ferdinand Bruckner's *The Criminals* (Die Verbrecher) were already directed or co-directed by him.

Such an alternative approach to the theatre was not unprecedented. The *Action Theater* was largely inspired by the ideas formulated and put into practice by that theatre commune, whose tours of Europe in the 1960s not only proved very popular but also aesthetically influential: the New York-based *Living Theatre*, which Julian Beck and Judith Malina had started in 1951. As Beck points out in his book *The Life of the Theatre*, this theatre troupe's approach proceeds from the observation of an increased theatricality in everyday life [4] and the conclusion that it ought to be theatre's task to counteract its effects:

> You cannot be free if you are contained within a fiction. Reality has been wiped out, we are living the myths of ourselves: we have to create reality.'[5]

Proceeding from the discursive approaches to the theatre as they had been developed

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[2] Michael Töteberg, 'Das Theater der Grausamkeit als Lehrstück', in *Rainer Werner Fassbinder* (Munich, edition text+kritik, 1989), pp. 20-34 (p. 22).
[3] Fassbinder, *Filme befreien den Kopf*, p. 101.
[4] Julian Beck, *The Life of the Theatre* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1972), section 111.
[5] Ibid., section 45.

by Bertolt Brecht and Antonin Artaud,[6] the *Living Theater* sought to awaken the 'Creator Spirit' among the audience by taking advantage of theatre's unique way of conveyance: the presence of the living actor in front of the audience.[7] Beck and Malina radically do away with the fourth wall and replace it by the idea of 'direct audience confrontation'.[8] By means of directly confronting the audience in the auditorium the *Living Theater* induce feelings of such strength that they lead to action and thus break through the numbness, 'the fiction' of everyday life. Accordingly, Beck and Malina called their theatre 'living' and, drawing on McLuhans famous slogan, announced that 'our presence is our message'.[9]

As the *Living Theater* thus prefigures the most important of those strategies which the *Action Theater* thrived on too, it is hardly surprising that the Munich stage was nicknamed the 'Living Theater in der Müllerstraße'.[10] However, by drawing on the *Living Theater's* aesthetic forms and strategies the *Action Theater* not only raised itself to one of the most advanced aesthetic positions at the time, but also implicitly reacted to the advent of television. For the *Living Theatre* not only built on Brecht's and Artaud's theories, but also took the latest developments in the field of the audio-visual media into account.[11] In fact, Julian Beck discusses the effect of television,

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[6] It is known that in 1945 Judith Malina attended the lessons of Erwin Piscator, who created, after he had emigrated from Germany in 1939, the Dramatic Workshop at the School for Social Research in New York. Here, the theatre director, whose experiments in the second half of the 1920s were carried out in close collaboration with Brecht, taught the latest developments in German theatre, until he returned to Germany in 1951. - Pierre Biner, *Le Living Theatre* (Lausanne: La Cité Editeur, 1970), pp. 11-12. Likewise, it is documented that Beck and Malina studied Antonin Artaud's *The Theatre and its Double* in the summer of 1958. - Theodore Shank, *American Alternative Theatre* (London, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1982), p. 10.

[7] It is only in the age of different co-existing media that this peculiarity of theatre's representations has been given its due weight as it now provides a relevant means to define theatre's distinctive features. Walter Benjamin, for instance, wrote about the relationship between theatre and radio in 1932: 'Der Rundfunk stellt im Verhältnis zum Theater nicht nur die neuere Technik, sondern zugleich auch die exponiertere dar. Er hat noch nicht wie das Theater eine klassische Periode hinter sich; die Massen , die er ergreift sind sehr viel größere; endlich und vor allem sind die materiellen Elemente, auf welchen seine Apperatur und die geistigen, auf welchen seine Darbietungen beruhen, im Interesse der Hörer aufs engste verbunden. Und was hat das Theater demgegenüber in die Waagschale zu werfen? Den Einsatz der lebendigen Mittel - sonst nichts. Vielleicht entwickelt sich die Lage des Theaters in der Krise von keiner Frage aus entschiedener als von der: Was hat der Einsatz der lebendigen Person ihm zu sagen? - Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 7 vols (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1972-89), II.2, p. 774.

[8] Shank, *American Alternative Theatre*, p. 10.

[9] Ibid., p. 30.

[10] Töteberg, 'Das Theater der Grausamkeit als Lehrstück', pp. 20-34 (pp. 20-21).

[11] The *Living Theater* may be considered the first kind of theatre, which developed directly vis-à-vis the medium of television. By 1951, about 10 million receivers were in operation across the United

puts the theatre into relation to it and thus justifies the conception of a 'living' theatre in contrast to the mass medium.

> Television: No matter how much information it supplies, it always makes the people weak, it takes away their power, it always makes them passive spectator, it never takes them to another life,... it diminishes awareness... Audience involvement is antidote for this, [...] in which people themselves take action and become heroic. Because the play / event only works [...] in the moment when the people are no longer the slaves of images parading before them, in the moment when they are instead possessed by the Creator Spirit and act out the creative impulses.[12]

As Beck's evaluation thus characterises the *Living Theater*'s aim of audience involvement as a countermove to the introduction of broadcast television, this implies that all those 'theatres' which were inspired by the *Living Theater* to rid themselves of the fourth wall equally represent a response to the existence of television. Thus the tradition of the *Living Theater* helps locate the *Action Theater*'s place in the context of the modern mediascape.

Although Fassbinder decided to stay with the *Action Theater* commune because of the specific kind of theatre which it stood for, he soon came under an influence which apparently appealed to him even more. In 1967 the French-German filmmaker Jean-Marie Straub visited the *Action Theater* in order to give a guest-performance. The filmmaker, who had just aroused much attention with his latest film *The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* (Die Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach), cut Bruckner's play *The Sickness of Youth* (Die Krankheit der Jugend) down to a show of about 10 minutes and put it on stage at the *Action Theater*. Fassbinder was very impressed by Straub's irreverence towards canonised works of art and admired his way of expressing it by translating filmic techniques of reduction into an

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States. As television reception thus grew drastically, most of its programmes were actually broadcast from the city in which the *Living Theater* was based. Tonio Balio writes that '[d]uring the early fifties, nearly all prime-time programming emanated from New York and was broadcast live. By the late fifties, nearly all prime-time programming emanated from Hollywood on film.' – Tino Balio, 'Introduction to Part I', in *Hollywood in the Age of Television*, ed. by Tino Balio (Boston, London, Sydney, Wellington: Unwin Hyman, 1990), pp. 3-40 (p. 17).

[12] Beck, *Life of the Theatre*, section 36. Obviously, this notion of television as a medium, which seduces its viewers into self-alienation, is quite similar to Fassbinder's idea of television as an 'imagination-killing means of suppression'. Thus, it does not appear surprising that the director was first intrigued by a Living Theater-inspired kind of theatre.

aesthetic minimalism for the theatre. So, when the young artist henceforth placed much more importance on *giving shape* to the emotions involved in the production than he did previously,[13] this was primarily a reaction to Straub's minimalist precision. No wonder that Fassbinder's first major directing experience, the staging of Bruckner's *The Criminals* (Die Verbrecher) was already marked by a similar approach.

However, Beck and Straub are not the only artists who were to have a lasting effect on Fassbinder's first steps towards an aesthetic approach of his own. For in 1967/68 the young director also discovered the German folk play of the 1920s in general and the writings by Marieluise Fleißer and Ödön von Horváth in particular. In the German folk plays of the 1920s Fassbinder found a prefiguration of his own - as he puts it - 'direct interest in people':[14] the works of these authors are based on life experience (*Erfahrung*) rather than an aesthetic concept, resulting in a close relationship between the people's presumed questions and problems and the aesthetics of the genre. In his *Gebrauchsanweisung* Ödön von Horváth characterises the folk play as a play

> in dem Probleme auf eine möglichst volkstümliche Weise behandelt und gestaltet werden, Fragen des Volkes, seine einfachen Sorgen, durch die Augen des Volkes gesehen.[15]

It is this nearness to the life of the people, the interaction between characters usually taken from the lower ranks of society, which sparked off the interest of a playwright who never thought very highly of the conventional forms of education and instead preferred to discover the world of human behaviour on his own. This interest soon bore fruits as Fassbinder decided in February 1968 to prepare one of Marieluise Fleißer's plays, *Pioneers in Ingolstadt* (Pioniere in Ingolstadt), for the *Action Theater*'s stage.

Thus it is mainly the aesthetic influences exercised by a dramatist and a filmmaker, which Fassbinder combined to create his own aesthetic approach to the

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[13] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 19.
[14] Ibid., p. 41.
[15] Ödön von Horváth, 'Gebrauchsanweisung', in Traugott Krischke, *Materialien zu Ödön von Horváth* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp. 51-56 (p. 54).

theatre. Not surprisingly, his theatre is therefore a theatre which mixes aesthetic devices from different media. Firstly, Straub's reductionism set off Fassbinder's fascination with the filmic principles of deconstruction and assemblage. 'Alles in Einzelteile zerlegen und neu zusammensetzen, das müßte schön sein',[16] pronounced the director in March 1971. Secondly, the development of Fassbinder's montage aesthetics went alongside a more and more foregrounded stylisation. Instead of trying to overcome the division between stage and auditorium, Fassbinder put the fourth wall back in place and devised an almost choreographic order of movement to confront the audience with the reproductive mechanisms of exactly that deadening everyday theatricality which the *Living Theater* set out to overcome. And finally, the nearness to life which the playwright and director admired in the works by Fleißer and Horváth not only had some impact on the selection of subjects, but also inspired the use of regionally inflected language in his plays. All these artistic means and strategies were combined to a coherent style in the first play ever to be written by Fassbinder, *Katzelmacher*:

> 'Katzelmacher' hat von der Form her, wie man's unserer Ansicht nach nur inszenieren konnte, sehr viel mit den 'Verbrechern' zu tun gehabt, hat in der Sprache sehr viel mit der Fleißer zu tun und war in der Kühle der Auffassung, wie man Menschen inszeniert, sehr an Straub angelehnt.[17]

This style characterises most of those plays which Fassbinder and his troupe, who now called themselves *antiteater*, are famous for. *Iphigenia in Tauris* (Iphigenie auf Tauris) *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*, *Anarchy in Bavaria* (Anarchie in Bayern), *Werewolf* (Werwolf), and *Blood on the Cat's Collar* (Blut am Hals der Katze), all these plays by and large follow those aesthetic principles by means of which Fassbinder sought to move away from the happening kind of theatre of the *Action Theater* and 'give shape' to his productions.

Although the plays mentioned above constitute what I would like to call the core of Fassbinder's dramatic work, they are by no means representative for his entire theatre work. In the aesthetic vacuum which the collapse of the *antiteater* in 1970 left behind it was the discovery of the films of the German-born, American film

[16] Fassbinder, *Filme befreien den Kopf*, p. 25.
[17] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 23.

director Douglas Sirk that sparked off another round of experimentation in Fassbinder's work for the theatre. Fassbinder discovered the work of the film director, who had become famous in the 1950s as a director of classical Hollywood melodramas at a retrospective at a Munich cinema. This event had a considerable impact on Fassbinder's further aesthetic development in the cinema, where the director now embarked upon the quest for the German Hollywood film. However, before he ventured to undertake his first film melodrama, he turned to the theatre to explore 'the reality of feelings', an approach which is evidently more in line with what is traditional considered as good theatre. Thus Botho Strauß wrote about the 1971 premiere of Fassbinder's latest play *The bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant) at the Frankfurt art festival *Experimenta*:

> Es wird etwas versuchsweise simuliert, und die Vortäuschung erweist sich als in sich plausibel and wahrhaftig. [...] Das Verfahren ist nicht mehr das 'kritische' Zitieren, sondern das komplette Imitieren, einschließlich der Gefühlsreaktionen, die so eine Geschichte auslöst. [...] Wenn nur die leibhaftige Theaterdarstellung seriös genug ist, so wird es für den wahrhaft Mitleidenden gleichgültig, ob Maria Stuart oder diese kleine Modezicke jammert.[18]

Evidently, as Strauß compares *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* with Schiller's *Maria Stuart*, the quest for the representability of human emotions in the wake of the discovery of the classic film melodrama moves Fassbinder's theatre closer to what is traditionally considered to be an adequate approach to the theatre.

As Fassbinder continued to work along the lines of an aesthetics which turns assemblage into simulation for the sake of melodrama - the production of *Bremen Freedom* (Bremer Freiheit) in December 1971 is only one example for this endeavour - the move towards a more melodramatic aesthetics opened the gates of the state-subsidised, high-culture theatre. After a number of one-off engagements with theatres in Munich, Bremen, Berlin and Nuremberg Fassbinder was now invited to work for established theatres on a regular basis. In 1972 he followed Peter Zadek's call to Bochum where he staged Molnár's *Liliom* and one month later a free adaptation of Heinrich Mann's *Bibi*. In the following year Fassbinder was invited to

[18] Botho Strauß, *Versuch ästhetische und politische Ereignisse zusammenzudenken* (Frankfurt/Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1987), pp. 237-38.

take the position of the artistic director of the Frankfurt *Theater am Turm* where he staged Karsunke's stage version of Zola's *Germinal* and later Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* in 1974. As Fassbinder's artistic output thus gradually moved closer to what a state-subsidised repertoire theatre usually has on offer, the new institutional framework did obviously not fail to encourage an aesthetic tendency which had first taken root in the wake of the director's discovery of the 1950s Hollywood melodrama.

However, as the established theatre scene thus provided all the means for Fassbinder to deepen his interest in the melodrama of group psychology, it left little room for aesthetic experimentation. While the aesthetic differences between Fassbinder and Zadek led to personal animosities which made any further attempt at a collaboration in Bochum appear futile - Fassbinder's production of Mann's *Bibi* was generally received as a slap in Zadek's face[19] - the Frankfurt employment, too, was soon bound for disaster. On the eve of his appointment Fassbinder set out to explicate his artistic aims in an exposé entitled 'Volkstheater im weitesten Sinn',[20] in which he pledges to embrace the democratic principles of co-determination and actor participation, according to which the *Theater am Turm* was already run at the time.[21] However, artistically this set-up proved to be rather counterproductive as the various competencies were not properly defined. Not surprisingly, critics and theatregoers were equally disappointed with the quality of the artistic result and the theatre's debts were rising. Within months the director was entrenched in a number of quarrels both financial and artistic in nature. Under these circumstances it may have seemed impossible for Fassbinder to hark back on his roots in the German folk theatre and develop them further.

In this atmosphere of aesthetic stagnation Fassbinder broke free and wrote what was to become his last ever play, *Garbage, the City and Death* (Der Müll, die Stadt und der Tod). Written rather casually on his return flight from New York,[22] the

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[19] Cf. Gerd Jäger, 'Fassbinders Anti-BO-Theater', *Theater heute*, March 1973, p. 22-23.
[20] Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 'Volkstheater im weitesten Sinn', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 28 November 1973, 8.
[21] *Das ganz normale Chaos: Gespräche über Rainer Werner Fassbinder*, ed. by Juliane Lorenz (Berlin: Henschel, 1995), p. 296.
[22] Berling, *Die 13 Jahre des Rainer Werner Fassbinder*, p. 255.

play freely varies some of the themes to be found in Gerhard Zwerenz's novel *The Earth Is as Uninhabitable as the Moon* (Die Erde ist so unbewohnbar wie der Mond) to create a play one of whose main characters is called 'The Rich Jew'.[23] As he thus brought old stereotypes, which had paved the way towards the holocaust, back into the public discussion, the public uproar was enormous: the play caused one of the biggest scandals in the history of post-war German theatre. Following accusations of anti-Semitism and 'left-wing' fascism,[24] the playwright-director resigned from his post at the *Theater am Turm* and the *Suhrkamp Verlag*, which was about to publish the play in the third volume of Fassbinder's collected plays, took unprecedented measures against it: the edition was liquidated. The play was never performed in Germany before Fassbinder's death in 1982 and also Dietrich Hilsdorf's attempt at publicly staging the play in 1985 had to be abandoned because of widespread protests.[25]

As a consequence of these events, Fassbinder abandoned the 'theatre strand' of his work. He never wrote another play. Only once did he return to the theatre to put another play on stage: in 1976 he adapted Claire Boothe's play *The Women* and staged it under the title of *Frauen in New York* at the *Schauspielhaus* in Hamburg. Although he always dreamt of a continuation of his work for the theatre - as late as the early 1980s he contemplated the project of a *Fedra* adaptation[26] - his commitment to the theatre was not unconditional. For as he explained in one of his 1976 interviews, working for the theatre only appeared worthwhile to him if he was given the possibility to experiment and do theatre like film:

> Erst dann mache ich wieder Theater, wenn man das wie einen Film machen kann, also konkret, direkt, zusammen mit Leuten, die sich dafür interessieren und davon betroffen sind; und nicht, daß man so Stücke liest und dann sagt: Dieses Stück wollen wir jetzt machen; das mache ich

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[23] This has actually been established in a court case by means of which the author of the novel attempted to prompt Fassbinder to withdraw his play on the grounds of plagiarism. For more information see Norbert Altenhofer, 'Absage an jeden Milieu-Realismus', in *Rainer Werner Fassbinder* (Munich: edition text+kritik, 1989), pp. 76-79.

[24] Cf. e.g. Joachim Fest, 'Reicher Jude von links', *Franfurter Allgemeine*, 19 March 1976, 23.

[25] For more information about the controversy see Janusz Bodek, *Die Fassbinder-Kontroversen*, (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1991); also: *Die Fassbinder-Kontroverse oder das Ende der Schonzeit*, ed. by Heiner Lichtenstein (Königstein/Ts.: Athenäum, 1986).

[26] Michael Töteberg, 'Rainer Werner Fassbinder' (1986), in *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*, ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold (Munich: edition text+kritik, 1978 -), p. 16.

überhaupt nicht mehr, dazu habe ich mich effektiv entschieden.[27]

To Fassbinder, the theatre is a medium for experimentation, experimentation mainly with the various methods, strategies and devices which the interplay with the filmic medium provides. Apparently, the established theatre scene could not satisfy the needs which such an approach to the medium brings about and provide the space which is necessary for experiments whose results can be uncertain.

As Fassbinder's work for the theatre thus appears to consist of mainly two phases - an early one which is predominantly characterised by the extensive use of montage techniques and a later one which cannot conceal the effect which the discovery of the 1950s Hollywood melodrama has had on it - two plays have been selected for close analysis. The play which is supposed to give an example for the early - I am tempted to say, 'classic' - phase in Fassbinder's theatre work is *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* (1969). On the one hand this play appears to be a prime example for the way in which Fassbinder has theatre and film aesthetics enter into a relationship of mutual exchange, and on the other hand its obvious reference to the performance of *Paradise Now* invites an interpretation against the background of the *Living Theater*'s aesthetics, a possibility which may help show how far Fassbinder moved away from the original performance style of the *Action Theater*. The second phase will be represented by Fassbinder's last play, *Garbage, the City and Death.* This is not only because it is the author's best-known and perhaps most notorious play, but also because it was written after Fassbinder's turn towards a more melodramatic aesthetics in the theatre. Moreover, being Fassbinder's last play, it helps define the aesthetic position at which the playwright arrived at the end of his artistic career in the theatre.

[27] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 80.

## II.2

## *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* or The Eternal Recurrence of Violence as a Montage Piece

### II.2.1 The Creation of a Ritualistic Dramatic Structure by Means of Media Interplay

Fassbinder's *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* is, just like its legendary precursor, the *Living Theater*'s *Paradise now*, a play whose main features hark back on the oldest form of theatre: the ritual. Both performances reject the traditional bourgeois form of theatre which rests on the re-presentation of the causal chain of an individual hero's dramatic career. Instead, both performances put the emphasis on the fact that it is people themselves and the way in which they interact which creates reality. Linear action is substituted by a rather circular structure of practice as it were, i.e. the constant repetition of certain patterns of behaviour for the purpose of internalisation. Thus the realistic notion of re-presentation by means of the imitation of action has been disposed of in order to invite the audience to share in the insight that certain ways of acting can evoke certain subjective and, by extension, objective realities. As the relationship between the means and ends of the theatre performance is thus diametrically opposed to that of the realistic theatre, both the *Living Theater*'s and the *antiteater* performances bring their messages across to the audience by drawing on the ancient or even prehistoric form of the ritual.

Although Fassbinder's play and the *Living Theater*'s performance thus make use of the same aesthetic form or genre, the different uses to which it is put in the two

pieces of theatre make it quite clear that *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* is by no means an 'adaptation' of *Paradise Now* as Jane Shattuc has asserted.[28] For whereas the *Living Theater*'s performance aims to awaken the Creator Spirit among the audience, i.e. turn the theatre into an institution of self-experience and personal liberation, Fassbinder's play retains an element of re-presentation in that it concentrates on everyday life and shows how people become complicit in the perpetuation of violence and cruelty. In order to do so the playwright takes up on the case of the English moors murderers Ian Brady and Myra Hindley, who, for the sake of dubious self-apotheosis, committed a number of murders in the English county of Yorkshire in the mid-1960s.[29] As this case is embedded in a social context which indicates the continuous reproduction of the same patterns of cruel behaviour in everyday life, the playwright demonstrates that the 'rituals' of self-assertion as they are daily practised do not follow the logic of emancipation and utopian hope, but rather perpetuate social alienation and thus give rise to criminal cases like that of Ian and Myra.

Whilst the element of re-presentation undermines the ritualistic character of the play, the documentary quality of the play's central story enables Fassbinder to convey the fact that characters themselves create the reality they live in. For as the artistic rendition of the criminal case shows to what extent the rituals of everyday interaction provide the basis for crime and cruelty, Fassbinder creates a model which not only shows that the circulation of the cruel behavioural pattern promotes its validity, but also how its validity confirms its social circulation. As the circulation and the validity of the behavioural pattern thus enter into a vicious circle, the convention of cruelty is shown to have taken root in social life to such an extent that it is virtually beyond change. Thus raised beyond the limits of time and history, it appears to have become the new, eternal fate. Consequently, although the ritualistic character of the play renders the ideas of dramatic causality and necessity obsolete, two of those categories which Georg Lukács has pointed out to be paramount to

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[28] Shattuc, *Television, Tabloids and Tears*, p. 95.

[29] Cf. Gerhard Mauz, 'Entschieden scheußlich...', *Der Spiegel*, 9 May 1966. Fassbinder changed minor details about the two murderers. For instance, he turns two of the characters' names, namely Hindley and Kilbride into Hinley and Killbridge.

theatrical representation, eternity and fate,[30] are affirmed. However, this affirmation is not based on any kind of metaphysical justification, but is derived from the self-perpetuating rituals of social convention themselves.

That Fassbinder succeeds in creating a social model on the basis of a combination of social re-presentation and ritualistic behaviour is mainly down to his dexterity in taking advantage of the aesthetic interplay between the media. This concerns practically all aspects of the play: its structure, the acting and the use of language. In each of these areas the playwright and director employs means and methods which were developed in close interaction with the modern media of film and television. However, it is in the play's structure that their impact is most apparent. Firstly, Fassbinder isolates different patterns of behaviour by separating different types of scenes, secondly, as he serialises these scene types he invokes the impression of repetitiveness, and finally, he achieves the practically free circulation of the play's scenes by implementing flexible intercutting. As all these artistic devices are, in one way or another, known from or related to film and television production, it is by means of media interplay that Fassbinder is able to revive the form of ancient rituals for the depiction of the social reproduction of cruel behavioural patterns today.

The first step towards the creation of a ritualistic cycle for the depiction of reproduced behavioural patterns, is the isolation of its different elements. This is achieved by the structural and thematic separation of those types of scenes of which *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* is composed. Fassbinder separates four different types of scenes or *Materialgruppen*, as he calls them in the stage directions:

> Das Stück gliedert sich in vier Materialgruppen:
> 15 contres: Szenen um das faschistoide Grundverhalten im Alltag, in denen jeweils zwei Personen gemeinsam gegen eine dritte agieren
> 6 Erzählungen über das Mörderpaar Ian Brady and Myra Hinley
> 9 pas des deux: fiktive Dialoge zwischen dem Mörderpaar
> 9 liturgiques: Texterinnerungen an liturgische und kultische Kannibalismen.[31]

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[30] Georg Lukács, 'Gedanken zu einer Ästhetik des Kinos', in *Schriften zur Literatursoziologie*, ed. by Heinz Maus and Friedrich Fürstenberg, 5th edn. (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1972), pp. 75-80 (p. 76).
[31] Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *Sämtliche Stücke* (Frankfurt/Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1991), p. 192.

While each of the *Materialgruppen* contributes a different aspect to the social background and the execution of the murders committed by the couple Ian and Myra, their separation thwarts any kind of hierarchy among them. As the play's outer structure does therefore not provide any guidelines for the understanding of the play, it is the *Materialgruppen*'s structural and content-related similarities and differences which give the spectator the possibility to draw conclusions as to the relationships between the various components.

The centre of the play is constituted by those scenes which describe the career of the moors murderers Ian Brady and Myra Hinley: the narratives and the *pas des deux*. The play's narratives show the couple's attempts at self-assertion and attention-seeking which eventually lead up to their first murder. Still at school, young Ian frequently tried to attract the attention of his class mates in an offensive way: he buried a cat alive, exhibited himself and began to collect Nazi souvenirs. Later, when he was working in various jobs to earn a living he became a petty criminal and was arrested several times. Ordered to return to the slums of Manchester to live with his mother again, he was unemployed for some time before he started work at an accountant's office. Here he met Myra who was, as she had never been with a man by then, quickly put on an emotional roller-coaster. When Ian finally decided to start a relationship with her, he subjected her to sadomasochistic treatment, Nazi cult and pornography, an education which she readily succumbed to. Finally, one night, as the couple drove through the moor, Ian demanded Myra, or 'Hessie' as he called her now, to prove how 'determined' she had become: they pick up who was to become their first victim: the boy John Killbridge.

The career of the two murderers is provided with a social context which is characterised by the constant reproduction of everyday cruelty. This is effected by the play's *contres*. Each *contre* uses the same set of anonymous characters, namely 'H', 'I', 'K', 'L', 'M', to show how everyday life is dominated by social constellations of two people attacking together a third person, who, in turn, regularly fails to assert him/herself. One of the *contres*, for instance, is about a woman who is evicted by the owners of the flat because she repeatedly had a visitor stay overnight. In another *contre*, a homosexual is attacked for his sexual preference by two of his

colleagues. The sixth *contre* of the play's Stuttgart version is actually based on a film scene from Fassbinder's favourite Godard film, *Vivre sa vie*. A man deceitfully approaches a prostitute just in order to be introduced to one of her colleagues. To indicate this unfair behaviour of two people attacking a third person, each *contre* is entitled by a formula like 'H+K-I'. This combination of characters is open to variation - another *contre* may be entitled 'I+L-H' - so that it becomes clear that everybody is equally likely to be on the side of the attackers or on the side of the attacked. There is no hiding from the cruel social behaviour and no profit to be gained from it; social circulation itself warrants its maintenance.

It is against this background that Ian and Myra engage in their highly stylised murderous activities in the play's *pas des deux*. These dialogues between the two characters demonstrate how Ian simultaneously humiliates and elevates Myra to prepare her for their first murders. Once he has decided that she is strong enough to be his partner, he introduces her into his philosophy of power and requires her to become a 'master being': Myra is not only taught to derive pleasure and self-esteem from his appreciation of her ability to submit herself to his will and violence, but is also ideologically brainwashed. Corporal punishment for having spent too much money goes alongside a reading of de Sade's novel *Justine oder die Mißgeschicke der Jugend*. Thus educated to scorn human life, Myra, who now addresses Ian as her 'Führer', takes part in his 'experiments': mention is made of three murders which are committed to be discussed in a racist way. Finally, Ian cements his rule by inviting his cousin Jimmy to become part of the group. As Jimmy is put before the alternative of either making an effort to become a 'master being' or be an unworthy victim, he does not hesitate long before he agrees to participate in the couple's crimes.

While the *pas des deux* are, just like the narratives, embedded in the *contres*' representation of the social reproduction of cruel behavioural patterns, they also appear to give rise to spiritual sublimation in the last type of the four *Materialgruppen*, the *liturgiques*. Endowing the play with a chorus comparable to those to be found in ancient Greek plays, three characters A, B, and C sing the praise of the Lord in such a way that the emphasis is not put on the glory of God or divine providence but on human submission, suffering and sacrifice. There is talk of thirst

for Christ's blood, a call for the new man to be born through sacrifice, unlimited submission to God's will and contempt for all worldly affairs. However, as they thus provide an insight into the inward realm of society, its value standards and accepted truths, the *liturgiques* do not represent direct quotations from the scriptures or other religious texts, but free reproductions from memory, or *Texterinnerungen* as Fassbinder calls them. This being-recalled of the *liturgiques* makes it quite clear that their validity is not due to a pre-established, universal truth or its social institution, the church, but to the conditions and conventions of social life today.

As the play is thus composed of four different, isolated types of scenes, the structure of *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* bears similarities to the structure of television programming. For it is here, in the mass medium, that programmes of different genres and formats follow each other to form a flow of great diversity. However, while television's diversity not only concerns genres, but also themes and topics, Fassbinder's separation of the various *Materialgruppen* is held together by one topic: the reproduction of fascistic patterns of behaviour in today's society and its escalation in one particular case. On the basis of this common theme, the play's epic, dramatic and liturgical scenes enter into a complex network of signification which the spectator is called upon to decipher. This network constitutes itself on the basis of the logical oppositions of past and present, the social and the individual. While narratives and *pas des deux* are linked up as they connect the couple's past and present, the relationship between *contres* and *liturgiques* parallels this connection on the social level. Equally, while *pas des deux* and *contres* complement each other insofar as they juxtapose the present of the individual case and present social conditions, narratives and *liturgiques* achieve the same on the level of social and individual past. As these relationships equip the play with an element of that unity which is characteristic of traditional artworks, it is here, on the thematic level, that the televisual structure is modified in order to be adjusted to the conditions of the older medium.

While the isolation of the play's dramatic components is achieved by the separation of the various types of scenes, its highly repetitive structure is achieved by their serialisation. Each *Materialgruppe* is serialised to varying extents on the basis

of a different method. While the linearity of the play's narrative part is adjusted to serial form as it is cut up into six portions, the serialisation of the *contres* is mainly a question of the multiplication of a given dramatic pattern. On the basis of this pattern, the *contres* vary topics and situations fifteen times before they are repeated in the second part of the play. By contrast, the serialisation of the *liturgiques* turns the *contres*' structure-theme relationship on its head and repeats the same theme while leaving the structure open for variation. Moreover, it is not only the *liturgiques*' internal structure which is thus varied but also their number used in the play; while the Munich version makes use of all nine *liturgiques*, the Stuttgart version only implements five of them. Finally, the different structural approaches to serialisation appear to come together in the serialisation of the nine *pas des deux* whose thematic and dramatic pattern is stable while also largely preserving the chronological order.

Evidently, serialisation, too, represents an aesthetic strategy which has been transposed from the modern media of film and television. For although the serial form was not invented by television and rather responds to a basic human need, as Knut Hickethier has pointed out by referring to the *Tales of One Thousand and One Nights*, it is here, in the mass medium, that it has been led to unparalleled popularity.[32] However, while in television serialisation first and foremost means narration on the basis of endless continuations which are sometimes stretched out over years, in *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* it is made use of within the format of an evening-filling artwork. This change in the framework conditions requires a structural change in the employment of the serial form to the effect that only scenes are employed, whose brevity is so extreme that none of them is longer than a printed page. Such brevity is, as Michael Töteberg has noted, highly reminiscent of the temporal economy of a film shot: he describes the play as 'timed' like a one-and-a-

[32] Knut Hickethier argues that '[d]as Erzählen in Fortsetzungen oder auch in wiederkehrenden Episoden kommt offenbar einem Grundbedürfnis menschlicher Unterhaltung nach und hat in der Fernsehserie nur ihre TV-bezogene massenmediale Form gefunden.' Notwithstanding the fact that the serial narrative structure is older than the TV series, it is still in television that it has found refuge today and provides the basis for one of television's characteristics, i.e. the ever-present flow of its programmes. - Knut Hickethier, 'Die Fernsehserie - eine Kette von Verhaltenseinheiten', in *Serie - Kunst im Alltag. I. Wissenschaftliches Kolloquium des Instituts für Medienforschung der Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen 'Konrad Wolf' Potsdam-Babelsberg*, Beiträge zur Film- und Fernsehwissenschaft, 43 (Berlin: Vistas, 1992), pp. 8-18 (p. 12).

half-hours film.[33] Thus, it is by the help of a filmic device that Fassbinder carries television's principle of serialisation into the theatre and thus succeeds in giving his play a highly repetitive structure.

As the play's dramatic components are thus separated and serialised on the basis of various scene types, they are now available for the flexible arrangement and rearrangement which brings about their circulation. This is mainly achieved by Fassbinder's use of the aesthetic principle of montage. The *Materialgruppen* are not separated and serialised to be presented one after the other, but in order to form what Wolfgang Seibel has called a *Schachtelmontage*, a montage of interlocked scenes.[34] With the exception of the *contres*, whose repetitiveness denies them much dramatic momentum, no two scenes of the same kind are ever to be found next to one another. Such a mosaic order refutes all traditional notions of dramatic causality and necessity and therefore outright invites structural variation:

> Das Stück kann man sich zusammensetzen, wie man es für richtig hält, doch sollten die Zusammenhänge der verschiedenen Komplexe noch verfolgbar bleiben. Auch sollte man in jedem Fall die Dialoge Ian / Myra in den Mittelpunkt der Dramaturgie stellen.[35]

In fact, while in the play's Stuttgart version a combination of two *pas des deux* and one *liturgique* alternate with one narrative while being separated from each other by three *contres*, in the Munich performance, clusters of *contres* of different sizes alternate with the narratives throughout the play with the exception of the play's symmetrical middle, which is constituted by an alternation of *pas des deux* and *liturgiques*.

Just like the separation and serialisation of the various scene types, this kind of montage, which facilitates the conveyance of the behavioural patterns' social circulation, simultaneously draws on filmic and televisual aesthetic forms. For as *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*'s various types of scenes are intercut by one another in a rather arbitrary and repetitive way, the parallel to the structure of television

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[33] Cf. Michael Töteberg, 'Chaos macht Spaß', *Theater heute*, 10 (1985), 48-51 (p. 48); also: Wolfgang Seibel, *Die Formenwelt der Fertigteile: Künstlerische Montagetechnik und ihre Anwendung im Drama* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1988), p. 182.
[34] Seibel, *Die Formenwelt der Fertigteile*, p. 175.
[35] Fassbinder, *Sämtliche Stücke*, p. 192.

programming, which similarly discourages any causal links between its recurring programmes, is easily drawn. In fact, Richard Kostelanetz has shown that the decline of the traditional notion of linearity is largely due to the impact of the new, technical media:

> [T]he form of the mixed-means theatre corresponds to the new media; for whereas the old theatre, as well as the old music and the old film, imitated the formal character of print by offering a line of development, the new theatre offers a discontinuous succession of images and events, which must be pieced together in the observer's mind if the piece is to be fully understood.[36]

However, the implementation of the structure of television programming in *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* ensues formal and functional changes. For while the recurrence of certain programmes on television follows a rigid schedule of time slots, Fassbinder's way of adopting it for his own purpose loosens its strings and makes it available for the free variation of the scenes' sequence. As this invokes the impression that the play was conceived of and written at the editing table, the playwright takes the theatre up on its claim of the uniqueness of its products by adding an element which appears to have been borrowed from one of the technical media, film. Consequently, it is the modification of television programming's structural organisation by means of a filmic device which secures the conveyance of the idea of circulation in the play.

As all the structural features which contribute to the play's ritualistic character are developed in interaction with the modern media of film and television, it is ultimately by means of media interplay that Fassbinder artistically externalises the social alienation of the main characters' actions. For the artistic strategies and devices which have been developed in close interaction with film and television create a structural parallelism between the individual case and the general patterns of behaviour. Media interplay thus provides the artistic basis for the insight that Ian and Myra do not find themselves in opposition to socially sanctioned behavioural patterns when they themselves assume the role of fate, but merely become the protagonists of the apparently inescapable circulation of cruelty. As the play thus,

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[36] Richard Kostelanetz, *The Theatre of Mixed Means* (New York: The Dial Press, 1968), p. 37.

very much in an Artaudian vein, uses 'violence and physicality as forms of social transcendence',[37] it creates a correspondence between two structures of internalisation on the play's formal and thematic levels. Just as the characters internalise the reproductive nature of social patterns of behaviour, the theatre, for the sake of its depiction, takes a number of artistic devices on board which are foreign to the medium.

### II.2.2 The Decline of Living Language in the Age of Reproduction

As language is one of the main vehicles of conveyance in the theatre, it does not come as a surprise that in *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* the reproduction of social patterns of behaviour is primarily conveyed by the characters' use of language. In fact, all individual originality of language use has been eliminated from the play. Instead, each of the four types of scenes is marked by a repetitive pattern of language use which affects both languages' content and form. However, as there is no obvious instance of power which enforces this kind of repetitiveness, the use of language in the play makes it obvious that it is the characters themselves who maintain the reproductive practice of socially provided patterns of expression. By constantly repeating the learned linguistic patterns the characters determine the social climate themselves and thus create the world they live in. As the emphasis is thus put on language's reality-creating powers, the use of language is in line with the general ritualistic character of the play. For it is here, in the ancient rituals, that the practice of certain linguistic formulae is used to create a reality which would not be there otherwise.

While the emphasis on linguistic repetitiveness constitutes an area which stresses the play's ritualistic character, there is an important difference as to the way in which it is made use of in the play. For while in the ancient and prehistoric rituals the practising of certain linguistic formulae provides form and shape to human

[37] Shattuc, *Television, Tabloids and Tears*, p. 99.

emotions so that they can be sublimated into a whole world inhabited by spirits and gods, the faultless facade of everyday toughness and cruelty in *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* highlights social alienation insofar as it suppresses and almost entirely eliminates the world of emotions. Thus the characters not only lose any spontaneity of emotional expression, but also increasingly fail to properly appropriate the linguistic role which they are supposed to assume. Not surprisingly, the continued practice of self-imposed linguistic patterns of conventional expression diminishes the characters' awareness of the 'here and now' to such an extent that oral language in the play takes on a rather mechanical sound. As the characters' power of linguistic performance is thus impaired, the frustrated emotions are liable to undermine the performance of the ritualistic practice of the linguistic convention.

However, although the mechanical sound undermines the credibility of the spiritual world language creates in the play, the characters' lack of emotional engagement is far from breaking through the vicious circle of reproduction. On the contrary, the characters' rather distracted oral performance actually highlights the conventionality of the individual utterances. For as character language appears to be quoted rather than - as can be expected from a theatrical performance - enlivened, the lack of emotional investment into the repeated practice of ready-made verbal formulae makes it appear as unnatural, barren and theatrical. Thus, the mistakes and lapses which the characters make do not only fail to add any kind of individual flavour to the words pronounced, but even emphasise the fact that it is the continuous reproduction of similar linguistic patterns itself which empties spoken language of all that authentic emotionality which alone makes it convincing. Consequently, as the emotionless reproduction of linguistic patterns thus stresses the decline of orality, the use of language in the play becomes a vehicle for the characters' social and self-alienation.

Artistically, the decline of oral language emerges from Fassbinder's fondness for the transposition of artistic means from the modern media of film and television. Three different aspects of language implementation can be identified in the play, all of which thrive on the technique of transposition: the stifling of the original, living spoken language, its substitution by an artificially imposed make-shift language, and

finally, the perverse revival of a dead language. While the original, living spoken language is suppressed mainly by the employment of rather epic text forms and the substitution of the original language is realised artistically by the rejection of the standard in favour of the use of German as a foreign language, the perverse revival of the living oral language is rendered by the introduction of an instance of mediation between the origin of the spoken text and its receiver. As these devices, the epic quality of some of the play's text types, the use of an unnatural form of language as well as the mediated mode of conveyance can be related to strategies as they are known from the modern media, Fassbinder's ability to depict an oral language in decline is down to his use of the possibilities offered by media interplay.

It is predominantly in the play's narratives, the *contres* and their *reprise* in the second part of the play that Fassbinder shows how living, spoken language is stifled. In order to do that he mainly operates on the level of the application of certain text types. In both *Materialgruppen* the playwright combines different dramatic and epic attributes in a way that the epic element takes over and living language is suppressed. While in the narratives, the living language of Ian Brady's and Myra Hinley's youth is prevented from coming back to life as the epic form assigns the events of the murderers' adolescence to the past, the dramatic form of the 'here and now' of interacting characters in the *contres* is eaten up by its constant repetition. Thus the *contres* not only provide a social background of epic breadth, but, by means of their *reprise* in the second part of the play, also show that the suppression of living language is an ongoing process whose future lies in the continuous decrease of emotional investment. For as Rudolf Krämer-Badoni notes:

> So ist mir die Wiederhohlung der fünfzehn kurzen Modellszenen - am Schluß des Stückes in umgekehrter Reihenfolge - am stärksten erschienen: sie werden nun nicht mehr dargestellt, sondern ihr Text wird von den mit jeder Szene dichter aufeinander zurückenden Spielern fast flüsternd aufgesagt; es ist eine puristische Demonstration: Emotionen gibt es nur noch in der Erinnerung an die erste Darbietung dieser Szenen.[38]

As the *reprise* thus gives the succession of the *contres* the quality of an epic flow of

[38] Rudolf Krämer-Badoni, 'Der Moormörder in uns', *Die Welt*, 4 February 1970, 23.

steady deterioration, both narratives and *contres*, albeit in different ways, introduce elements of the epic text type into the stage show and in doing so demonstrate how living language is stifled in a social context of repeated cruelty.

Such an employment of epic means on the stage is essentially due to the aesthetic influence of the new, technical media. In fact, according to the novelist Alfred Döblin, the epic qualities of contemporary plays should be traced back to the aesthetic innovations which have been popularised by the medium of film. Reflecting about Erwin Piscator's 1924 staging of Alfons Paquet's play *Fahnen* (Flags) Döblin wrote:

> Paquet hat den Anarchistenaufstand von Chicago bewußt so dramatisiert, daß das entstehende Gebilde auf einer Zwischenstufe zwischen Erzählung und Drama verblieb. [...] Ich möchte glauben, dies Zwischengebiet ist ein sehr fruchtbares [...] Im Roman-Drama war zu Äschylos Zeiten noch der Mutterboden des Dramas; er kann es wieder werden. In unserer Zeit weist das Kino, die dramatische Bildererzählung ... auf diesen Weg.[39]

However, while Döblin argues for the liberation of the epic work from the book because only in this way it is able to take 'die wichtigsten formbildenen Kräfte der Sprache' on board,[40] Fassbinder does not employ epic elements in the theatre in order to make the representation more vivid. On the contrary, the invocation of the two main characters' past in the narratives and the epic breadth and flow of the *contres* unfolds exactly that deadly effect which Döblin ascribes to the book: 'der Tod der wirklichen Sprache'.[41] Consequently, as Fassbinder's transposition of epic elements from the cinema into the theatre inverts Döblin's anticipation of a new epic theatre, it is the emphasis on the death of the living language which integrates the epic elements into the theatrical framework.

While the suppression of the living spoken language is brought about by the employment of artistic means proper to epic text types, the substitution of the living language in the *pas des deux* is brought about by Ian's and Myra's appropriation of the German language. The German language as it is spoken by Ian and Myra assumes

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[39] Quotation taken from Erwin Piscator, *Das politische Theater* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1963), p. 62.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.

a heavy English accent, abundant with grammatical mistakes and literal translations from the English. For instance, in the third *pas des deux* of the play's Stuttgart version Myra says: 'Und auch ich habe eine Ahnung auf das' which obviously is a faulty translation of the English 'And I, too, have and idea of it', mistaking a phonetic similarity for a semantic one. In the same vein, Ian says in the same *pas des deux*: 'Ich kaufte ein Buch. Zu lesen darin, hat mich weitergebracht.' Here, Ian not only overlooks the fact that in spoken German the English past tense is often replaced by the present perfect, but, in the second sentence, also keeps to the English word order. A last example may be taken from the sixth *pas des deux* of the Stuttgart version in which Myra carries the English question tag into the German language: 'Es wirkt sich aus, wirkt es?' As the multitude of mistakes characterises the killers' way of speaking as acquired and self-imposed, the German language, as Dagmar Ralinofsky has pointed out, is turned into an artificial language: 'die Behandlung des Deutschen als Fremdsprache macht sie zur Kunstsprache'.[42]

Just like the employment of aesthetic elements proper to epic text types, the constitution of Ian's and Myra's artificial language bears the marks of the modern media's influence. For as will be explained in more detail in the section on the use of language in Fassbinder's early film *Katzelmacher*, the rejection of the standard High German which the use of German as a foreign language implies, moves the *pas des deux*'s application of language in the proximity of the more naturalistic representations of mainly journalistic television. For here foreign accents are - as long as they are comprehensible - perfectly acceptable. However, in *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* the foreign accent is not just an indicator for the characters' nationality, but also hints at their deliberate effort at assuming a new, self-selected identity. As the foreign accent is thus integrated in the symbolical framework of the theatrical medium, the play betrays its place within the traditions of the theatre: Fassbinder's television-inspired application of language finds itself in the tradition of Marieluise Fleißer's and Ödön von Horváth's folk plays, which similarly use idiosyncratic language to indicate a character's psychology.

Finally, the eventual perversion of language, which appears to be the logical

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[42] Dagmar Ralinofsky, *Die Gestaltung zwischenmenschlicher Beziehungen im Drama der Moderne* (Frankfurt/Main, Munich: Peter Lang, 1976), p. 51.

conclusion of the previous two movements of the stifling and the substitution of living language, is artistically rendered by the introduction of an instance of conveyance which regulates the relationship between the origin of language and its receiver. Such a mediation of language mainly concerns the *Texterinnerungen* of the *liturgiques* and that portion of Ian's and Myra's dialogues which is assembled by means of playback. While the playback makes it evident that the couple's dialogue about the killing of the girl is a technical reproduction in the absence of the characters, in the case of the *Texterinnerungen* it is the respective characters themselves who turn themselves into 'media'. For as they reproduce the 'cannibalistic' message of ancient times, they turn themselves into mouthpieces and revive a language which is essentially dead. As the source of the language spoken is thus absent in both cases, mediation allows the truth of perversion to be pronounced and the mask to be lifted. In fact, *Texterinnerungen* and playback passage represent the only instances of unrestrained orality in the play: while the playback passage brings this across by the characters' use of the native English,[43] the *Texterinnerungen* emphasise it by the freedom of the recitation.

Perhaps it is this last aspect of the use of language in the play which makes Fassbinder's implementation of aesthetic means, which originate from the modern media, most obvious. For it is the idea of mediation itself which provides the basis for the existence of the modern media. Moreover, both devices, the implementation of playback as well as the idea of *Texterinnerung* can be related to specific artistic methods and conventions developed by the modern media. On the one hand, as playback is not essentially different from sound montage in that it uses the audible side of the representation to indicate the presence of an absence, the parallel to filmic means of expression is easily drawn. On the other hand, the idea of *Texterinnerung* is the outcome of a new perception of language use which was, as one of Peter Brook's experiments clearly shows, largely set off by the modern media's way of representing

[43] Dagmar Ralinofsky has investigated the relationship between die English dialogue on tape and the otherwise German communication in the *pas des deux* and has come to the conclusion that the English text passage serves to provide a glimpse of the two murderers' real, authentic selves: 'Die Selbstverständlichkeit, Alltäglichkeit des Mordens wird durch die Kommentierung in englischer Sprache, vom Tonband erfolgend, deutlich: schnelle, alltägliche Handgriffe des Tötens werden in der Muttersprache erläutert, sobald die Reflexionsstufe einsetzt, wird erneut die deutsche Sprache verwendet. - Ibid., p. 48.

verbal interaction. Peter Brook asked his actors to select only those words from a classical play which they would have used in a realistic situation:

> The fragment of scene that emerged would have made good cinema, for the moments of dialogue linked by a rhythm of silences of unequal duration in a film would be sustained by close shots and other silent, related images.[44]

As this method, which was also practised at the *Action Theater* and *antiteater*,[45] clearly results in what is known from the representational conventions of cinema, it becomes clear that both techniques of mediating language rely on forms and devices which have emerged from the aesthetic interaction with the modern media. However, as playback and *Texterinnerung* in the play are not employed as working methods whose trajectory ends at naturalness, but as aesthetic devices in order to stylise the perversion of language use, they are - just like the rejection of the standard High German in the *pas des deux* - integrated into the symbolical framework of theatrical representation.

The decline of oral, living language in *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* is mainly brought about by the implementation of linguistic conventions as they are known from the modern media of film and television. Thus it is by means of media interplay that Fassbinder externalises the emotional drying-out of the characters in the face of cruel social conventions. The employment of rather epic text types for the depiction of the stifling of living language, the rejection of the standard High German in order to show the substitution of living language by a self-imposed, artificial language as well as the introduction of an instance of mediation for the conveyance of the perverted remnants of living language - all these means indicate the extreme extent to which conventional speech patterns have erased authentic living language and thus

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[44] Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 135-136.

[45] Botho Strauß has observed that Fassbinder's adaptations of Goldoni's *The Coffee Shop* and Lope's *The Burning Village* are so far removed from the original that they appear as if they were written down from memory. - Strauß, *Versuch ästhetische und politische Ereignisse zusammenzudenken*, p. 189. However, as Yaak Karsunke points out, the method of updating through *Texterinnerung* was not invented by Fassbinder, but used in the *Action-Theater*'s rehearsals of Sophocles's *Antigone* before he actually joined them. The play's director, Peer Raben, explained on the programme sheet: 'Bei der Probenarbeit wurde der Text der einzelnen Szenen von den Schauspielern aus der Erinnerung an eine gelesene Fassung spontan verwendet. Das Ergebnis wurde von mir fixiert...' - Karsunke, 'anti-teatergeschichte', pp. 7-16 (p. 8).

come to dominate the characters' consciousness. As it is thus by means of the transposition of artistic devices from the modern media into the theatre that Fassbinder is able to externalise the characters' internalisation of the social other, both the play's thematic and formal sides come together as they contribute to that correspondence between two structures of 'the one within the other' which has been pointed out as the artistic principle which underlies his entire work.

### II.2.3 The Implosion of Social Interaction. The Choreographic Acting Style of the *antiteater* Performance

Besides the use of language in Fassbinder's early play, the acting, too, is determined by the overall issue of the reproduction of social patterns of behaviour. Indeed, when the *antiteater* performed the Munich version of *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* under the direction of Fassbinder's co-operator Peer Raben in Darmstadt in January 1970, the director applied an acting style which was marked by the constant repetition of similar actions and movements by all the characters. However, as there is no recognisable instance of social power which would demand this, it is obviously the characters' own desire to integrate with the other characters which prompts them to recognise the standards and patterns of their social intercourse. As the existence of this pattern is thus itself the result of a continuous process of imitation, the characters effectively promote the circulation of the behavioural pattern by means of an imitation of imitation. Thus it is made clear that, rather than the other way round, the validity of the behavioural pattern is preserved and maintained by its circulation. As the imitation of imitation thus gains reality-creating powers, the acting style applied in the production of *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*, just like the play's structure, harks back on theatre's ritualistic roots.

However, the ritualistic kind of character interaction in Fassbinder's play appears to clash with the way in which it is put into practice. For whereas rituals give shape to human emotions in order to use them for the performance, the characters in

*Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* integrate with the social norm at the expense of their own emotional energy. Continuously repeating the same behavioural patterns, the characters work deliberately towards a severe loss of self. Emptied of all personal feelings, the characters interact in such a mechanical way that all distinctive individual characteristics are lost and they are effectively reduced to automatons. As what Bert O. States has termed the 'self-expressive mode' of the theatrical performance is thus almost entirely repressed,[46] the characters not only remain entirely anonymous, but also blend into one another. Failing even to represent their own self, they merely appear to anticipate their own death. As it is thus rendered obvious that the repeated practice of the same cruel behavioural pattern locks the characters in a state of severe personal inauthenticity and social alienation, their emotional detachment works against the aims of any ritualistic performance.

While the characters' being turned into automatons jeopardises the reproduction of the pattern of behaviour, their emotional detachment supports the artistic rendition of the imitative nature of the interaction. For as the mechanical acting makes the performance of cruel behaviour everything but convincing, the fact that the personal feelings of the characters are denied any impact on the interaction brings out its conventionality. Mechanically imitating conventional patterns of behaviour does not facilitate any proper social interaction, but keeps the characters under the spell of alienation. Thus, although the affirmative element in the imitation of the cruel pattern of behaviour appears to be aimed at social integration, the fact that this entails an increasing sense of loss of self among the characters makes the ritualistic practice of the same pattern of behaviour destroy all the social and communal bonds between them. Consequently, the acting style makes it clear that the mechanical reproduction of a circulating pattern of behaviour not only confirms its validity, but also completes social alienation in what Fassbinder may have recognised as today's social reality.

In order to give the performance an aesthetic form which would be apt for the conveyance of the characters' mechanical way of imitating one another, Fassbinder entrusted his play to his composer Peer Raben, a choice which draws attention to the

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[46] Bert O. States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theatre* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1985), p. 160.

play's musical characteristics.[47] For as Rudolf Krämer-Badoni notes in his review of the performance, Raben indeed sought to do justice to these features by giving the characters' mechanical interaction an outright choreographic quality:

> Alles in stilisierter Choreographie, Schlagen und Morden wird nur an den zusammenbrechenden Opfern und am genüßlichen Gesichtsausdruck der Täter sichtbar. Zwei Mörderinnen treten unter Aufsicht zweier Ganoven neben einen Fertigzumachenden, der sich angstvoll nach ihrem Vorhaben erkundigt, und schon bricht er sterbend zusammen; die zwei Mörderinnen stehen nur lächelnd da.[48]

Although the play's acting style thus appears primarily to draw on a technique which was developed for ballet to go together with any respective music, it is interesting to note that Raben's choreography mainly relies on two artistic devices which are associated with the modern media of film and television. These devices concern first and foremost the apparent dismantling of space into a number of smaller spatial units on the one hand and the introduction of a rather fantastic time structure on the other. As these devices, which effectively remove the stage action from the spatial and temporal co-ordinates of the auditorium, are highly reminiscent of the modern media's split screen and slow / fast motion techniques, it is by means of media interplay that Raben puts the implosion of social interaction on stage.

In order to show the breakdown of social bonds, Raben's use of choreography in his production of *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* distorts the duration of the characters' movements to such an extent that it affects the flow of time in the theatre. This manipulation works in two directions. On the one hand the actors' movements may be slowed down, on the other hand occasional accelerations of movement may speed up the sequence of events. Georg Hensel notes:

> Die Darsteller überziehen oder unterspielen Sprache und Posen durch Zäsuren, Verlangsamungen und Beschleunigungen.[49]

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[47] The reader may already have been struck by the fact that the various *Materialgruppen* either bear names borrowed from music or dance, or represent forms which could easily be interpreted in this way: *contre*, 'reprise' (the repetition of the *contres* in the second half of the play), *pas des deux*, *liturgique* and recitative. The fact that Fassbinder modifies the original name of the dance (pas de deux) may be due to Fassbinder's intention to emphasise 'the dance of the two', i.e. the deadly dance of Ian and Myra.

[48] Krämer-Badoni, 'Der Moormörder in uns', 23.

[49] Ibid.

As the choreography thus manipulates the time-structure of the representation rather than, what is more common in traditional plays of the bourgeois theatre, the represented time of whatever is put on stage, Raben's staging of Fassbinder's play contradicts the traditional temporal structure of theatrical representation: real time. Since the events on the stage are thus given temporal co-ordinates which are altogether different from those of the auditorium, the 'here and now' of the performance is thwarted. Thus, this aspect of the choreography contributes to the constitution of a rather closed system in which human beings behave like lifeless, mechanical puppets.

Rather startling in the theatre, this way of making use of time is not unusual in the technical audio-visual media. Although the acceleration and the slowing down of the rhythm and its interruption by means of caesuras was first known in the field of music, there is no denying the fact that it was the medium of film which first made these artistic possibilities available for the audio-visual arts. Especially the early film played extensively on the manipulation of time: the accelerating, slowing down and visual rewinding of the film strip are techniques which were frequently exploited when the medium itself was still the main attraction. However, while the manipulation of time in the medium of film relies on the various possibilities created by the film apparatus, the transposition of temporal manipulation into the theatre requires it to resort to other means. For as there is no technical equipment to mediate between artistic production and reception, the modification of the flux of time has to be adjusted to the representational possibilities of the theatrical medium. It is in response to this immediacy of theatrical representation that Raben integrates the manipulation of time into the acting itself, thus enabling the theatre to convey a more complex perception of time.

Besides the rather fantastic temporal order it is the peculiarities of the play's spatial arrangements which contribute to the impression of the performance's phantom character. Whilst a conventional performance uses the stage in its entirety to provide a unified space for the interaction of the characters, Raben's choreography prevents the stage room from forming a unified whole as it appears to cut it up into different spatial fragments. For as Georg Hensel notes in his review, the director

manipulates the spatial dimension of the performance to the extent that the distance between the characters becomes unbridgeable: '[k]örperliche Brutalitäten werden ohne Körperberührung in ihren Bewegungsabläufen vorgeführt'.[50] As the characters thus remain spatially separated even in situations of high tension, they do not appear to share the same space. The mere indication of interaction again works against the theatrical 'here and now' and thus makes the performance appear to lose all its actuality. Consequently, Raben's choreographic manipulation of space, too, contributes to the impression of the stage as a closed system in which the characters rather mindlessly wind down their programmed pattern of behaviour rather than properly interact with their dramatic opponents.

As the acting style in Raben's production of Fassbinder's play thus subverts the unified space of the theatre stage, its aesthetics is again moved in the proximity of filmic representation. For it is here, in the medium of film, that the unity of space was first given up when the split screen technique was developed to show related actions in two different places. For instance, the technique was employed as early as 1959 in Michael Gordon's film *Pillow Talk* in order to show two people engaged in a phone conversation. However, while in film this technique is usually employed to show two people who are emotionally or otherwise very close to one another but separated by spatial distance, Raben, in order to make use of this device in his production of Fassbinder's play, inverts this relationship between emotional and spatial distance: although the spatial distance is almost negligible, the emotional distance between the characters makes it unbridgeable. Thus, the modification of the filmic device and its integration into the choreographic acting style manipulates the use of theatrical space to the effect that Raben is able to convey the message that the social interaction between the characters has broken down.

So, just like the play's structure and its use of language, the acting style of the play's performance, too, rests on Fassbinder / Raben's implementation of artistic means borrowed from the modern media. As these means are used to show to what extent the repeated reproduction of the same pattern of cruel behaviour represses any emotional investment on the part of the characters, it is by means of media interplay

[50] Georg Hensel, 'Monster-Modelle', *Theater heute*, 3 (1970), 14.

that Raben's performance style gives access to the characters' states of mind. For as both the temporal manipulation of the characters' movements and the spatial distortion of their interaction clearly indicate the breakdown of social interaction, both devices artistically externalise the character's social alienation. As a consequence, the acting style of Raben's production of *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* follows that idea which has been pointed out as the main stylistic principle of Fassbinder's work, that is a correspondence between two structures of internalisation. Just as the characters' brutality is the result of their exposure to a recurrent social experience, so is its artistic rendition informed by aesthetic means whose implementation appears to result from theatre's exposure to cinema's forms of representation.

The fact that Fassbinder's play as well as its production under Raben's direction makes use of devices transposed from the modern media in order to externalise the characters' state of mind, has a decisive effect on the positioning of the audience. For as the interplay with the technical media tends to turn the stage into a kind of showcase which exhibits the interaction of the characters as a closed system similar to that of guinea-pigs in a laboratory,[51] the 'fourth wall', which the *Living Theater*'s performance of *Paradise Now* set out to tear down is not only put back in place, but even reinforced. While the distance thus created between stage and audience forestalls the audience's capacity actively to take part in the performance, the audience are effectively addressed as voyeurs of the vicious circles of social oppression. As a voyeur inevitably becomes an accomplice of what his watching turns into a spectacle, this kind of positioning turns the audience into accomplices of the atrocities committed by Ian and Myra. Thus, although *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* retains many of the ritualistic features of *Paradise Now*, his determination to 'give shape' to his plays makes Fassbinder move away from the *Living Theater*'s emancipatory concept of direct audience confrontation.

As Raben's performance style addresses the audience as voyeurs, it is very

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[51] Karlheinz Böhm testifies that this effect is by no means accidental. Describing the stage set for Fassbinder's staging of *Uncle Vanya* Böhm recalls: 'Aber bei "Onkel Wanja" ist er so weit gegangen, daß er eine Veranda wie einen Guckasten bauen ließ. Darin fand der erste Akt statt, und zum Publikum hin war alles verglast [...], so daß die Schauspieler wie in einem Aquarium saßen [...] Das zeigt ganz typisch: Es war eine geniale Filmidee.' - *Das ganz normale Chaos*, p. 318.

much indebted to a form of perception, which is typical of narrative cinema. For as the cinema spectator, because he watches the events shown on the screen from a secure distance without being in danger of being discovered, he very much assumes the attitude of a voyeur. However, while the cinema exploits this as a pleasure to be sold at the box offices, Fassbinder's / Raben's transposition of cinematic distance into the theatre is not pleasurable: the audience of *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* are addressed as voyeurs of a vicious circle of social repression and its results. In being so they are made aware of their own contribution to the rough social reality outside the theatre. Thus, although Fassbinder effectively turns the *Living Theater*'s approach on its head, he nonetheless holds on to the Artaudian tradition. For the mental attitudes of 'strictness, diligence, unrelenting decisiveness, irresistible and absolute determination,'[52] which characterise Artaud's idea of cruelty not only apply to the serial killers, but also to the address of the audience as voyeurs. As long as personal 'liberation' outside the theatre continues to be fought for at the expense of others, the theatre, Fassbinder appears to suggest, should not provide a glimpse of freedom but confront the audience with their own share in a debatable social climate. Consequently, the director accomplishes his version of moral enlightenment by making use of cinema's aesthetic devices in order to bring out the audience's *own* internalisation of the social other.[53]

In conclusion it may be pointed out once more that Fassbinder's will to 'give shape' to his plays is largely realised on the basis of the implementation of artistic devices borrowed from the modern media. The play's structure, its use of language as well as the way in which it was put on stage by Peer Raben, all these aspects of the play show that its ritualistic aesthetics rest on the use of artistic devices which are transposed from either film or television. Thus, as far as the early work for the theatre is concerned, Fassbinder's statement about the aesthetic reciprocity of theatre and film cannot only be confirmed, but has also to be supplemented by a reference to the aesthetic conventions of television. For although many of the transposed devices like

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[52] *Artaud on Theatre*, ed. by Claude Schumacher (London: Methuen, 1989), p. 107.

[53] If Fassbinder indeed attempts to enlighten his audience as Georg Hensel has asserted then he is certainly not interested in enlightening them about their social reality, but rather about their own contribution to this reality. The only kind of realism Fassbinder is interested in is the realism of the spectator.

the technique of montage can, due to the far-reaching similarities between film's and television's aesthetic techniques, be traced back to either of the technical media, the specific way in which they are implemented is more reminiscent of television than of film aesthetics. As Fassbinder thus goes well beyond what he envisaged himself, Wolfgang Seibel's assessment that '*Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* hat, in formaler Hinsicht jedenfalls, bis heute nichts von seiner Kühnheit eingebüßt', can only be supported.[54]

[54] Seibel, *Die Formenwelt der Fertigteile*, p. 182.

## II.3

## *Der Müll, die Stadt und der Tod* or The Unreliability of the Theatrical Sign

### II.3.1 Undermining the Pattern of the Bourgeois *Trauerspiel by* Using a Televisual Dramatic Structure

Unlike the early plays like *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*, the 1975 play *Garbage, the City and Death* clearly bears the marks of Fassbinder's aesthetic re-orientation in the wake of his discovery of the Hollywood melodrama. In fact, very much like Fassbinder's first melodramatic theatre production, *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, *Garbage, the City and Death* focuses on a doomed personal relationship between two unequal characters. The Frankfurt prostitute Roma B., who, although the daily experience of her profession should have taught her otherwise, builds her life on the firm belief in the power and divine nature of the human soul, enters into a relationship with the real estate agent The Rich Jew, who, in turn, conducts his business on the basis of a corrupt connection with the city council. As this relationship eventually leads to Roma B.'s self-sacrifice, the play not only resumes a topic which is as old as the bourgeois theatre, the topic of the *mésalliance*, but also betrays the tradition of the 18th century *Trauerspiel*.[55] For Roma B.'s sacrifice for the sake of her conviction clearly puts her character in line with characters like Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's Emilia Galotti or Christine in Arthur Schnitzler's more recent

[55] Cf. Elsaesser, *Fassbinder's Germany*, p. 185.

play *Liebelei*.

However, while the chosen topic of self-sacrifice puts *Garbage, the City and Death* in the tradition of the bourgeois theatre, the way in which it has been transferred into the modern reality of the business capital of Frankfurt undermines the *Trauerspiel* genre's perspective. For as Roma B.'s belief in the human soul and its identification with god denies her any assertiveness, her experience of a relationship with a man who is versed in establishing social connections and pushing through his interests is not that of an elevating feeling of happiness, but one which confuses her identity. In order to win her over, The Rich Jew isolates her from her social environment and thus cocoons her in a kind of cobweb in which love is turned against itself. As she is thereby deprived of the metaphysical basis of her life, the belief in the identity of the human soul and god, Roma B. is required to renounce a standpoint which, according to the logic of the play, makes her suffer from pneumonia in what is identified as the socially cold environment of the city. Consequently, when Roma B. offers herself for sacrifice towards the end of the play, this is not done in an attempt to assert her perspective but because she cannot endure its loss.

While the heroine's lack of assertiveness undermines the *Trauerspiel*'s moral perspective, the lost belief in the identity of the human soul and god explains her wish to be sacrificed. For as Roma B. is deprived of the metaphysical basis of her life, she is no longer in control of her life and even her sacrifice does not provide any transcendence of social reality. For as The Rich Jew yields to Roma B.'s wish to be sacrificed, he jeopardises his social position to the effect that the city's network of connections is activated to protect him. Thus, any possible social and public effect which her death may have caused is neutralised from the beginning as it is immediately integrated into the ongoing cycles of social corruption. As it is therefore the only man she seriously believed to love, her husband and pimp Franz B., who is falsely accused of her murder and taken into custody, even Roma B.'s surrender to the cold urban environment is posthumously turned against her. Consequently, as Roma B.'s self-sacrifice is the result of the lost belief in the identity of the human soul and god, it confirms the limits of the individual's powers of social transcendence

for the sake of which it was agreed to.

It is striking to see that Fassbinder renders this inversion of the traditional pattern of bourgeois *Trauerspiel* by giving his play a dramatic structure which is highly reminiscent of a television soap opera's plot construction. *Garbage, the City and Death* consists of two parts with the caesura almost exactly in the symmetrical middle of the play. These two parts consist of complementary dramatic movements. Whereas Roma B. is still in control of her life when The Rich Jew looks for a way to get near her in part one, part two depicts Roma B.'s downfall in the consequence of The Rich Jew's successful subversion of her life. Thus characterised by the main characters' alternating ups and downs, the play's dramatic structure finds itself in the aesthetic proximity of television soap operas. For as a dramaturgy of alternating ups and downs guarantees the possibility of endless continuations, a feature which is constitutive for television soap operas, this genre makes use of this dramatic structure to a large extent. Thus, transposing television's plot construction into the theatre, the playwright makes the two parts of *Garbage, the City and Death* appear like two isolated episodes of an ongoing series of events.

It is in the first of these two parts of the play that Fassbinder shows how, as Miss Violet puts it, people become 'kleiner und kleiner' in a city which becomes 'größer von Tag zu Tag.[56] Although the characters, all of whom are part of or associated with the red light milieu, suffer from the social coldness of the city, their unhappiness does not make them revolt against the social conditions, but actually leads them to reproduce them and thus contribute to their Ianus-headed character. While the prostitutes yearn for love and philosophise about the nature of the human soul, they nonetheless engage in power play and betrayal on a large scale. Similarly, Roma B.'s husband and pimp Franz B. suffers from a full-fledged inferiority complex, a fact which makes his behaviour towards his wife overbearing and even violent. Likewise, while Roma B.'s father Müller insists on taking up the position of the patriarch of the family, he also enjoys his double life as a transvestite. Even Roma B. is no exemption from the characters' rather schizoid condition. For if she is the only character in the play who seeks to uphold her moral standards, she is also the

[56] Fassbinder, *Sämtliche Stücke*, p. 675.

character whose weakness is physical: the chronic pneumonia, from which she suffers, is, according to the play's logic, due to the city's frosty social conventions.

This is the situation when The Rich Jew, the character who is partially responsible and therefore representative for the coldness of the city, enters Roma B.'s life. This character is an estate agent who carries out the rebuilding of the city of Frankfurt on the basis of what could be called a mutual symbiosis with the city council. While the council benefits from the estate agent's ethnic origin insofar as his Jewishness makes him and hence the entire project untouchable in a society which has yet to come to terms with its recent past, The Rich Jew not only makes a fortune as the foremost executor of the council's building scheme, but also enjoys the protection of the police. However, as this arrangement, in which he serves as the straw man of other people's plans, fails to make the estate agent happy or even satisfied, the structure of his personality is not fundamentally different from that of the other characters. In fact, he himself admits his non-identity with himself when he states: 'Ich bin kein Jud wie Juden Juden sind'.[57] As it is thus neither his Jewish origin nor the possibility that he may be more identical with himself than the other characters, his effect on people is solely down to the power and money he is in control of.

As this character begins to take interest in Roma B., his presence has a devastating effect on the prostitute's social life in the second part of the play. For as the Rich Jew's overt self-interest causes among her friends and family what Artaud envisaged as an 'intense liberation of signs', [58] Roma B.'s social life is destroyed to the extent that she is completely isolated at the end of the play. The first character to be turned inside out by The Rich Jew's influence is Roma B.'s husband and pimp Franz B.: as he finds himself deserted by his wife, he is suddenly susceptible to Oscar von Leiden's homosexual advances and discovers the masochistic pleasure he takes in suffering. The next character to reveal his true nature is Roma's father, Müller. As he is given to understand by The Rich Jew that he knows about his incestuous relationship to his daughter, Müller reveals himself as an old Nazi who takes pride in the fact that he is likely to have gassed The Rich Jew's parents. Finally,

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[57] Ibid., p. 677.
[58] Schumacher (ed.), *Artaud on Theatre*, p. 91.

as the expensive presents, which Roma receives from The Rich Jew, cause the gap of social difference between herself and her fellow-prostitutes to widen, the latter complete Roma B.'s social isolation when they, out of jealousy, decide to terminate their friendship with her.

As the wake of The Rich Jew's power thus proves to be stronger than the emotional bonds, in which Roma B. believes, she herself is the last character in the play to be turned inside out by The Rich Jew's influence. Her entire social life having been undermined, Roma B. has to admit that her belief in the fundamental agreement between her soul and god was founded on a lie.

> ROMA B. [...] Wir hassen einander, bekämpfen uns, statt einig zu sein. Und das alles hast du so gewollt, Gott! Den Menschen Erkenntnisse geben, die er nicht in der Lage ist zu erfüllen. Wir verbrennen, und du wärmst dir deine gichtigen Finger an uns.[59]

As her existence is thus shattered in its foundation, she decides to sacrifice herself: she asks The Rich Jew to kill her. Yielding to Roma B.'s wish, The Rich Jew ignores the rules of 'coolness', which his position requires of him so that his subordinate, the Little Prince, scents his chance to capitalise from his boss's mistake. However, having been instructed to protect The Rich Jew, the police not only kill the Little Prince as a potential traitor, but also look for somebody who can be made responsible for Roma B.'s death. Having already exposed himself as easy prey, it is Franz B. who is taken into custody as the alleged murderer of Roma B. As it is thus the man Roma B. believes to love who is to stand trial for her murder, her sacrifice - agreed to in the name of love - is turned into a total defeat and consequently cleared of all its meaning.

As the dramatic movements of the main characters thus create a pair of alternating ups and downs, the play's structure is well-chosen for the externalisation of the main characters' internalisation of the social other. While in part one Roma B.'s upward curve indicates that her appeal to an ideal community of people positions her above the other characters and thus reveals that she has internalised the social other only to a certain degree, The Rich Jew keeps a low profile as he prepares

[59] Fassbinder, *Sämtliche Stücke*, p. 705.

his conquest by taking in the ways of her social environment. Thus, in part two of the play, The Rich Jew's curve rises to a position from where he can dominate the interaction of the characters, while Roma B. goes down when she is subjected to his social power and internalises its effects. As this dramatic structure has been pointed out as a device which is characteristic of television plotting, it is by means of media interplay that the artistic externalisation of the internalisation of social standards is achieved. Thus, just like *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*, the dramatic structure of *Garbage, the City and Death* builds on the stylistic principle of a correspondence between two structures of internalisation. While on the thematic level 'the play ... expose[s] the process by which fascistic relationships are internalized, and consequently normativized in capitalist society',[60] as Erik MacDonald has noted, on the formal level this is rendered by a dramatic structure whose pattern is borrowed from television soap operas.

### II.3.2 The Confusion of the Play's Textual Identity by Filmic Means

Unlike the earlier play, *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*, *Garbage, the City and Death* makes use of many of those sign systems which are traditionally associated with theatrical representation. Whereas in the earlier play most of the characters are merely indicated by a capital letter, the characters of Fassbinder's last play bear names, a fact which makes them identifiable as social and psychological types. Moreover, most of the scenes which make up *Garbage, the City and Death* include stage directions, a feature which is almost entirely excluded from the earlier play. However sparse their application may be, these stage directions not only concern the way the actors are supposed to interact, but also the kind of stage sets to be used. Finally, the play is subdivided into eleven scenes which, all contribute to the evolution of the same dramatic plot. Although this subdivision does not appear to go easily with the symmetry of the play's structure, the quantitative symmetry of the

[60] Eric MacDonald, 'R.W. Fassbinder and the Politics of Simulation: Two Plays', in *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, 1 (1990), 131-150 (p. 141).

two parts is maintained. The implementation of these sign systems gives the play the outward appearance of a traditional play so that on the level of its concrete artistic rendering, too, the play approximates the illusionist aesthetics of the bourgeois *Trauerspiel*.

Although the play thus takes pains to make use of many of those means which the conditions of theatrical representation provide to warrant the realistic representation of a play's events, their application does not appear to obey by the rules of realistic illusionism. For whereas realism developed a coherent sign system of symbolic relationships, the way in which Fassbinder's last play makes use of those devices which the theatre inherited from its illusionist tradition thwarts the coherence of the representation. Indeed, the playwright's application of illusionist means is carried out in a way which is rather confusing than enlightening. In some cases the play's subdivision into scenes, its stage directions and the names of its characters may indeed add an additional feature which contributes to the explanation of the events shown; in many others, however, this additional feature finds itself in no symbolic relationship to the dramatic unit signified. Instead, the relationship between certain theatrical signs and their point of reference may be characterised as contradictory, accidental, or simply inappropriate. As Fassbinder's negation of the illusionist sign systems' coherence thus undermines its symbolical function, *Garbage, the City and Death* questions theatrical signification in general.

The reliability of the theatrical sign thus being called into question, the play dissolves the dialectics between essence and appearance, a dialectics which is essential for theatre's power to transcend social reality and create meaning. For the fact that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is at least partially broken up negates the metaphysics of identity on which the distinction between essence and appearance rests.[61] There are no more hierarchies; essence and appearance find themselves on the same level, cancelling each other out so that ultimately everything is just appearance. Thus the play indeed appears to present no

[61] As Manfred Brauneck has shown, the philosophy put forward by the theatre is determined by the metaphysics of identity as it was developed by the ancient Greek philosophers. It is this notion of identity which Fassbinder sets out to deconstruct in his play which ensues that the transcendence facilitated by the distinction between essence and appearance is no longer available. Cf. Manfred Brauneck, *Theater des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1982), p. 17.

more than 'reflektionslose Bilder' as Georg Hensel has remarked rather critically.[62] In fact, as a large part of the play is taken up by the various outings of the characters, any references to deeper layers of meaning are just superfluous: as what could constitute the depth dimension of the play is brought up to the surface, the search for any meaning behind the phenomena turns out to be futile. As the dialectics of essence and appearance is thus replaced by the dualism between two different kinds of seeming, the medium's metaphysical dimension is subsumed under what Jean Baudrillard has called the 'binary code'.[63]

Artistically, the collapse of the metaphysics of identity as the epistemological basis for theatre's representations comes about as Fassbinder transposes artistic means into the theatre which feature prominently in the aesthetics of the modern medium of film. Regardless of whether Fassbinder's application of stage directions, the naming of the characters or the subdivision of the play into smaller units is concerned, the subversion of the play's textual identity emerges from the implementation of filmic devices. While the play's textual identity is questioned by a recurrent montage of songs in between the individual scenes, the identity of the characters is confused as the - more often than not - highly suggestive nature of the characters' names clashes with their personalities. Similarly, Fassbinder's stage directions do not always respect the limits of theatre's conditions of representation and instead suggest a rather filmic vision. As all these devices can, in one way or another, be related to forms of representation as they are to be found in the environment of cinematic representation, it is by means of media interplay that Fassbinder questions theatre's power to transcend social reality.

When Fassbinder appears to take great care to characterise his characters by their names, this is mainly done in order to confuse the audience's expectations. As Roma B.'s fellow-prostitutes bear aristocratic names like Frl. Emma von Waldenstein, Marie-Antoinette, Asbach-Lilly, Miss Violet, their names obviously clash with their way of earning a living. Similarly, Oscar von Leiden's name, which translates as 'Oscar of Suffering', may at first appear to signify his subdued

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[62] Georg Hensel, *Spielplan: Schauspielführer von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: List, 1986), p. 1119.

[63] Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (London: Sage Publications, 1993), pp. 57 ff.

character. However, it is not him who turns out a masochist but Franz B., who he seduces. Also the names of the Rich Jew's subordinates, the Little Prince and the Dwarf, deliberately confuse our expectation. The Dwarf belies his name by his megalomaniac behaviour, while the Little Prince, a character who evokes memories of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's narrative of 1943, *The Little Prince*, gravely disappoints expectations as well. For as the reminiscence of the book makes us expect a very sensitive and good-natured character, Fassbinder's Little Prince is an extremely ambitious figure, who cannot wait to bring his boss down in order to climb up the social ladder himself. Besides, the Rich Jew's perception of his non-identity with himself has already been referred to. These examples show that Fassbinder's way of naming his characters is guided by a deliberate arbitrariness which often suggests a symbolical relationship between the respective character and his name just in order to break it down.

Such a chasm between the characters' names and their personalities is an artistic strategy which is much more opportune in the medium of film than in the theatre. For as the theatre primarily relies on the characters on the stage in order to create its representations of social interaction, in the medium of film, due to the different representational means, it is the situation which is primary to the representation as a whole, while the importance of the characters, who are put in this situation, tends to be secondary.[64] Thus, the medium of film is much more likely to be able to compensate for irregularities among the characters, whilst in the theatre a contradiction built into the constitution of the characters seriously threatens to confuse the social interaction represented. As this, however, is exactly the effect Fassbinder aims at in *Garbage, the City and Death*, he not only shows that the dramatic situation dominates the characters, but also deliberately undermines theatre's conventions of representation by means of a strategy which relies on representational conventions which are not as dependent on the characters as they are in the theatre: the representational strategy as it is encouraged by the cinema.

Besides the constitution of the characters, the assemblage of songs into the

[64] Quoting Jean-Paul Sartre, André Bazin writes: 'in the theatre the drama proceeds form the actor, in the cinema it goes from the decor to man'. Obviously, this state of affairs makes it easier in film to take the social condition as the starting point of the dramaturgy. – André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), p. 102.

text, too, questions the identity of the play's dramatic text. Each scene of the play is framed by either a piece of music taken from the traditional high culture or from modern pop culture. They include a duet from *La Traviata*, *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, a children's rhyme, and a cabaret piece. These pieces of music not only fragmentise the flow of the play's events, but also parallel and complement the action of the play. However, as Erik MacDonald has shown, the relationship between the play's events and the assembled pieces of music should also be read in the other direction insofar as each piece of music pulls the respective event in the play out of its historical specificity and highlights its general validity within Western culture as a whole. The patterns of domination in *La Traviata* are replicated on the stage between the Rich Jew and Roma B.; if the latter is a staged emotional intensity, the former is a reminder that such things are replicated throughout society, and need not be specific to this particular play.[65] Consequently, the assembled pieces of music question the identity of the dramatic text in two ways: within the text, as they fragmentise the flow of the play's events, and intertextually as they provide points of reference outside it.

Such an assemblage of songs into the dramatic text is not unprecedented in the theatre. In fact, it is an artistic strategy which is used extensively in the plays by Bertolt Brecht, like for instance in the plays *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* and the *Threepenny Opera*. However, even though there is a tradition in the theatre for this kind of artistic strategy, its emergence is nonetheless due to the aesthetic influence which the birth of the cinema and the formation of its conventions of representation has exercised on the theatre. For as Brecht himself points out in his *Annotations to the Opera The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* the dramaturgy of his plays is not based on organic growth but on the principle of montage,[66] a principle whose implementation in his plays is most apparent in the assemblage of songs into the dramatic texts. As this artistic principle of montage was, as has already been pointed out in the previous chapter, first developed in the technical medium of film, Brecht's dramaturgy is indebted to cinematic forms of representation. Consequently, Fassbinder's drawing on this aspect of Brecht's

[65] MacDonald, 'R.W. Fassbinder and the Politics of Simulation', 131-150 (p. 138).
[66] Bertolt Brecht, *Versuche 1-12* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1963), issue 1-4, p. 104.

conception of the epic theatre, implies a recourse to cinema's aesthetic devices.

Finally, the application of the stage directions in the play, too, clashes with the conventional mode of theatrical representation and thus witnesses Fassbinder's endeavour to upset preconceived notions of identity. One such stage direction which contributes to the unreliability of the play's sign system is to be found in the first scene, in which the moon is declared to be the place of action, because 'er [ist] so unbewohnbar ... wie die Erde, speziell die Städte'.[67] However, as the characters begin to act in this setting, the stage direction is immediately belied by the issues dealt with and the way the characters interact. As the setting is thus obviously not the moon but the city, scene one is, unlike scene two, which is introduced by the stage direction 'Milieu, realistisch',[68] turned on its head. However, it is not only the characteristics of the settings which are confused by Fassbinder's stage directions, but also those of the acting. When Asbach-Lilly is shot dead without any apparent reason at the end of scene one, she, just a moment later, gets up and continues to play her part. Although the assault is subsequently explained as theatre on the theatre, the incident not only has the effect of a shocking surprise, but also confuses expectations. That this rather startling dramaturgy is not accidental but indeed the result of artistic deliberation is rendered obvious when Fassbinder has Franz B. exclaim: 'Oh! Was für eine Dramaturgie!'[69]

Again, such a freedom in the use of the stage directions is more in line with filmic conventions of representation than with those of the theatre. For the rather magic and even supernatural dimension, with which the play is thus endowed, is, as Parker Taylor notes in *Magic and Myth of the Movies*, usually associated with the cinema rather than with the theatre:

> Briefly, movies, similar to much else in life, are seldom what they seem. In this sense – being, to begin with, fiction – movies are dreamlike and fantastic [...] Camera trickery is really camera magic, for illusion can be freely created by the movie camera with more mathematical accuracy and shock value than by sleight-of-hand magic

[67] Fassbinder, *Sämtliche Stücke*, p. 667.
[68] Ibid., p. 672.
[69] Ibid., p. 689.

or stage illusion.[70]

Thus, when the stage directions in *Garbage, the City and Death* have Asbach-Lilly cope with the attempt on her life very much like John Travolta in Quentin Tarantino's film *Pulp Fiction* or switch settings in a way which replaces drama's causal logic by a polemic one, they give the play a degree of weightlessness which is usually associated with the cinema. Consequently, Fassbinder's questioning of the stage directions' reliability as a sign system is the result of his transposition of filmic means into the theatre

As the unreliability of theatre's various sign systems questions the identity of the dramatic text, Fassbinder's peculiar way of making use of character naming, songs and stage directions succeeds in externalising the effect of the characters' internalisation of social patterns of behaviour as an intense liberation of signs. As the characters 'free' themselves from the signification of their names and the dramatic text liberates itself from the narrow scope of one line of action just as much as the stage directions exceed the limitations of theatrical representation, the strategy of Fassbinder's application of theatre's sign systems effectively conveys the impossibility of transcending the social reality of the big city, a condition which Fassbinder reflects on when he has Frl. Emma von Waldenstein pronounce that '[k]einer ist wie er ist. Jeder ist anders. Wer weiß schon Bescheid'.[71] As this subversion of theatre's interest in the metaphysics of identity is achieved by the use of artistic devices which have been transposed from the medium of film, it is by means of media interplay that Fassbinder depicts a social reality which is very much in line with one of the fundamental assumptions of postmodernist theory.[72] Thereby Fassbinder's implementation of theatre's traditional sign systems in *Garbage, the City of Death* contributes towards the realisation of the same correspondence between two structures of internalisation as has been pointed out as characteristic of Fassbinder's entire work.

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[70] Parker Taylor, 'From Myth and Magic of the Movies', in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen, Leo Braudy, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 725-729 (p. 727).

[71] Fassbinder, *Sämtliche Stücke*, p. 675.

[72] Citing Jean Baudrillard for support I will only replace the word 'value' by 'signs': 'Referential signs are annihilated giving the structural play of signs the upper hand.', Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, p. 6.

II.3.3 Reaching the Audience in the Big City. Increasing the Shock Value by Transposing Television's Mode of Issue-Oriented Representation into the Theatre

Fassbinder has given *Garbage, the City and Death* the shape of a play to be performed at the Frankfurt theatre *Theater am Turm*. Thus, although the memory of the play survives primarily in Daniel Schmid's 1975 film adaptation *In the Shadow of the Angels* (Im Schatten der Engel), the director, who, by then, was well-acquainted with and experienced in all the audio-visual media, took a conscious decision to present his art work to a theatre audience rather than to a cinema or television audience. This choice is significant because a theatre audience is in constitution and character fundamentally different from the latter two. For whereas a cinema audience is invited individually to sink into a daydream in the anonymity of the cinema's darkness and a television audience may watch discursively in the intimate space provided by one's living room, the theatre audience shares time and space with the actors, a fact which enables the performance to take on the character of a collective experience. As the theatre thus facilitates much more of a community feeling than cinema or television, the social conditions under which *Garbage, the City and Death* was to be received by the audience still parallel those under which theatre was born: the social context of functioning communities.

However, when Fassbinder undertook an attempt to put his play on stage in 1975, he was, as the content of the play itself shows, very much aware of the fact that there was no functioning community on which he would be able to rely for the production of his play. For already when the director arrived in Frankfurt in 1974, the city was a place in transition: by the end of the 1960s it had developed into a major centre of speculation in real estates. These activities concentrated around an area which has come to be known as the Frankfurt Westend and began with the housing crisis in 1965-67. Then, the mostly leftist and sometimes illegal occupants of the one-time very fine district of bourgeois villas were either forcibly evicted from their apartments or their accommodation was left to deteriorate to such a degree that at some point it had to be declared uninhabitable. Riots occurred; however, this did not prevent the developers from pushing through their plans and turn the entire area into

a showcase of western capitalism with ultramodern skyscrapers of steel and glass. Thus, the rebuilding of the Frankfurt Westend not only gave Frankfurt the cold gloss of bank buildings, but also entailed the break-up of the quarter's traditional social structure.

As the far-reaching implosion of the city's social structure in the consequence of the housing crises can be taken as symbolic for a development which has largely destroyed the sense of community which is essential for theatre's mode of artistic representation,[73] theatrical representation itself receives a deadly blow. For the break-down of the social structures opens up theatre's traditional mode of representation and its sign systems for the rather unpredictable reactions of an increasingly heterogeneous audience and thus renders it unreliable and perhaps even ineffective. However, instead of giving in to this situation, Fassbinder questions the new, democratic identity, which German society was keen to assume after the war, by calling one of his main characters The Rich Jew, thus playing on one of those dangerous stereotypes which paved the way towards the Holocaust. As he thereby takes recourse to the taboo, the forbidden topic which is crucial for the constitution of any social community, Fassbinder makes use of an artistic means in whose proximity theatrical representation has always dwelt,[74] in order to revive theatre's powers of social transcendence. In the shape of The Rich Jew, theatre comes back with a vengeance in order to give the audience that kind of homogeneity which seems crucial for the theatrical mode of representation.

However, in contrast to Sophokles' *Oedipus Rex* for instance, the taboo in *Garbage, the City and Death* is not developed and dramatised; rather it is shown how it can be instrumentalised for those economic purposes for the sake of which millions of other Jews had to die before. For as the fact that The Rich Jew is, as Fassbinder himself points out in one of his interviews, the only character in the play who is truly

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[73] In the context of the conditions, under which the theatre survives in the ultra-modern big American cities, Johannes Birringer has pointed out that the architectural solutions found not only cause the gap between the interior and exterior realms of human experience to widen, but also continue to deconstruct the traditional (theatre) community. As these conditions by and large also apply to today's Frankfurt, it is not surprising that Birringer actually commences his explorations with a consideration of Fassbinder's *Garbage, the City and Death*. Johannes Birringer: *Theatre, Theory, Postmodernism* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 26 ff.

[74] Brauneck, *Theater in 20. Jahrhundert*, p. 32.

able to love makes the label identifiable as a cliché,[75] it becomes obvious that it is the cliché which is tabooed and not what it denotes; the taboo of The Rich Jew is no more real than the connotations attached to the label. Thus, however, the label is not only instrumentalised within the text but also with regard to the play's aesthetic effect on the audience. For the tabooed cliché overshadows the play's events to such an extent that the actual problems dealt with in the play - Roma B.'s struggle with the coldness of the city - tend to recede into the background while giving the play a great deal of directness in the address of the social issue. Thus confronting the audience with the 'plague' of their past, the playwright deals them a shock of an Artaudian quality, a shock as real and cruel as life itself and is thus able to reach the rather anonymous and heterogeneous audience of the city directly.

This strategy of issue-related directness is indebted to a mode of representation which is known from the modern medium of television. For it is here, in television drama, that the interaction of the characters, as will be discussed in more detail in this book's part on Fassbinder's work for television, proceeds from a certain issue which thus provides the basis for a series of dramatic clinches. Thus the issue-dominated dramaturgy of television drama results in a more or less steady flow of events which all result from a basic dilemma. However, in order to transpose this strategy into the theatre and give the central issue a comparable weight, Fassbinder does not take the problematic issue as the dramatic basis, but conversely imposes it upon the dramatic events. For the fact that the rich entrepreneur is Jewish does not appear necessary for the dramatic plot to be developed in the way it has been in the play; it is more of an appendix to the action than a constituent part of it. As Fassbinder thus brings up the Jewish issue in passing with a matter-of-course attitude which contradicts the sensitivity of the issue, the effect is much greater than in television drama, whose dramaturgy is designed to avoid anything seriously surprising or unsettling. Thus it is by means of the modification of a televisual aesthetic device that the sharpest splinter of theatre's heritage, the taboo, is made productive for one of today's plays.

As has been noted before, this artistic strategy did not fail to have a

[75] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 83.

considerable effect on the German public. Indeed, as it prompted large parts of the public to engage in another 'liberation of signs' outside the theatre, i.e. in widespread protest against the play, the transgression against one of the youngest and therefore strictest taboos, the genocide of the Jewish people, appears to be a very effective - albeit debatable - method to break open post-war Germany's established order and make a community respond, whose traditional social structure has imploded. Thus it succeeded in denouncing those socio-psychological mechanisms which enabled the German public after the war to carry out a U-turn in its relations to the Jewish people and which Fassbinder commented upon laconically by arguing: 'Philosemiten sind Antisemiten, die die Juden lieben'.[76] Consequently, on the level of its reception, too, the play's aesthetics aims at the externalisation of internalised social values. As this externalisation is brought about by means of a device which has been transposed from the medium of television, Fassbinder's way of positioning the audience vis-à-vis his last play is characterised by the same correspondence between two structures of internalisation which marks the director's entire work: the externalisation of the internalised social other on the part of the audience finds its counterpart on the formal level in the interplay of the media.

What kind of light do the results of the analysis of the play shed on the allegations of 'left-wing fascism' mounted against Fassbinder? In the light of the present approach to his work it does not appear important whether or not these allegations are justified; rather, the very fact that the play managed to provoke such a wave of protest must, in the context of theatre's rather precarious situation in the age of competing mass media, be considered a real achievement.[77] Drawing on the tradition of Artaud's theatre of cruelty, which was equally casual in ethical matters, Fassbinder tears down the old theatre of social transcendence, builds up a new one and immediately proves its effectiveness. The playwright touches upon this issue when he defends his play by contrasting it with the established German theatre:

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[76] Ibid.

[77] In his book *Fassbinder's Germany: History, Identity, Subject*, Thomas Elsaesser objects to the play on ethical grounds by appealing to the 'unrepresentability of the Jew' (pp. 175-195). However, this is an objection which Fassbinder was well aware of as the early play *Just One Slice of Bread* shows and should therefore not be used against him. Besides, in *Garbage, the City and Death*, Fassbinder is out to attack the tabooed cliché in the people's minds and not to declare Jews as 'sacrificial figures'.

> Man muß doch die Möglichkeit haben, an ein Thema mit gefährlichen, vielleicht angreifbaren Methoden heranzugehen und nicht nur mit diesen abgesicherten; sonst entsteht wieder so etwas Totes wie alles in der deutschen Theaterlandschaft. Es passiert da ja nichts Lebendiges: alle nur freundlich, alle nur brav, und alle wollen nur gefallen.[78]

However questionable this standpoint may be, the life of the theatre is apparently more important to Fassbinder than what may be considered politically correct. Measured by this intention of the author, the play must - not in spite of, but because of the scandal - be regarded as a problematic success.

In conclusion it can be stated that it is not only in his early plays that Fassbinder makes use of media interplay, but also in his later ones. As the validity of his statement about the reciprocal aesthetic influence between the theatre and the cinema films must thus be extended to his entire theatre work, it also has to be broadened: in both cases, in the early play as well as in the final play, it is not only the influence of the cinema that helps bring about the director's rather Artaudian theatre aesthetics, but also that of television. However, although Fassbinder obviously remains faithful to a working method and an aesthetic principle which he developed very early in his artistic career, the way in which it is made use of in the two plays considered here clearly indicates the shifts in its application. The use of filmic and televisual means in *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* results in a massive formalist attack on the theatre, a fact which - albeit in a negative way - proves that the theatre still represents a social power to be reckoned with. The aesthetics of *Garbage, the City and Death*, by contrast, is already built on the ruins of theatre's mode of representation; as all the traditional theatrical means applied are *a priori* undermined, the play does not offer dramatic theatre, but dramatic theatre quoted and put to the test. Consequently, Michael Töteberg's characterisation of the play in terms of melodrama, expressionism and satire overlooks the role these elements fulfil in the play,[79] a role which can only be given due weight when Fassbinder's fondness of media interplay is taken into account.

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[78] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 84.
[79] Töteberg, 'Rainer Werner Fassbinder' (1986), p. 19.

# Part III

# The Aesthetics of Fassbinder's Work for the Cinema

## III.1

## Cross-Media Fertilisation - Beginning and End of Fassbinder's Film Production

### III.1.1 *antiteater* and Television Funding: The Institutional Background of Fassbinder's Film Production

Although the creation of more than forty films with all the artistic qualities which are characteristic of Fassbinder's work within a period of thirteen years appears almost unthinkable without the extraordinary qualities which the director combined in his character, it is not only thanks to his personal and artistic qualities that he was able to leave behind an artistic œuvre whose extent and quality are equally astonishing. The general political and social climate at the time, too, had a strong and multi-layered influence on the development of his aesthetics of the personal film. Not surprisingly, this influence took effect mainly through the channels provided by the different media Fassbinder worked for. Firstly, Fassbinder's film production is almost unthinkable without the strong financial and artistic support from a theatre troupe whose existence is strongly indebted to the social atmosphere of protest and revolt at the end of the 1960s, the *antiteater*. Secondly, a number of laws and agreements passed or initiated by the social-liberal Federal government in the second half of the 1960s and 1970s strongly encouraged the collaboration between German filmmakers and television stations. In many ways these legal provisions provided the economic basis for the rise of the new German cinema as a whole, which, thirdly, then began to

build up its own infrastructure. All these factors have to be taken into consideration if the phenomenon of the Fassbinder film is to be explained.

How important the support from the *antiteater* was indeed for Fassbinder's early film production becomes clear as soon as one considers the way in which the *antiteater-X-film*, the *antiteater*'s film production company, worked. For this outlet of the theatre troupe was by no means an ordinary film company. As its organisation reflects the *antiteater*'s principle of collective work with equal opportunities for everybody, the company did not have the status of a legal person, so that Wilhelm Rabenbauer (alias Peer Raben), the producer of Fassbinder's early films and composer of many of Fassbinder's soundtracks, was personally responsible for the company's financial affairs.[1] This organisation of the film production was not unproblematic: as Fassbinder's early films can hardly be called commercial success stories, actors and other members of the crew did not work for previously agreed fees, but for shares in the films' turnover with only a slim chance of receiving an appropriate amount of money.[2] Notwithstanding these shortcomings, *antiteater-X-film* produced or co-produced nine out of the ten full-length feature films made in 1969 and 1970, among them *Love is Colder than Death* (1969), *Katzelmacher* (1969), *Rio das Mortes* (1970), *The Niklashausen Journey* (1970) and *Beware of a Holy Whore* (1970).

Half a year after the end of the *antiteater* in the autumn of 1970, Fassbinder, like many other new German filmmakers, started his own production company, *Tango-Film*. This company was run in a more 'professional' way as due to a serious threat from the inland revenue, Fassbinder's mother, Liselotte Eder, helped out and took over the bookkeeping of her son's film production. Otherwise, however, the company's foundation did not have any immediate repercussions on Fassbinder's film production. Although it roughly coincided with the director's turn towards the melodramatic genre, most of the theatre's actors continued to act in or otherwise contribute to the films, so that the *antiteater* continued to provide the basis for their production. *Tango-Film* produced or co-produced nine of the feature films produced

[1] Apparently, Peer Raben was not very accurate in keeping the company's books so that the inland revenue threatened to persecute Fassbinder for tax evasion. - *Das ganz normale Chaos*, pp. 260-262.
[2] Bronnen and Brocher, *Die Filmemacher*, p. 173.

between 1971 and the director's death in 1982. Among them there are Fassbinder's melodramas, for instance *The Merchant of Four Seasons*, *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, as well as the more radical films of the late 1970s such as *In a Year with 13 Moons* and *The Third Generation*.

Although the *antiteater*'s contribution to the establishment of Fassbinder's independent film production should thus not be underestimated, both the *antiteater-X-film* as well as the *Tango-Film* would have found it very hard to assert themselves outside the specific conditions of West Germany's film production. Like most of the other directors of the Young and New German Cinema, Fassbinder profited from the legal measures taken in the late sixties and early seventies. In 1967 West Germany's Film Promotion Law (*Filmförderungsgesetz*), by means of which the Film Promotion Board (*Filmförderungsanstalt*) was set up, passed the parliament. From this institution, Fassbinder, being a well-known filmmaker, soon received 'automatic' subsidies to finance his films.[3] In 1974 the Film Promotion Law was supplemented by the so-called Film / Television Agreement (*Film / Fernseh-Abkommen*) which expanded on the existing opportunities for co-operation between film industry and television by putting the emphasis on co-productions. On the basis of such arrangements, television became a vast market for filmmakers like Fassbinder and it is indeed hard to believe that Fassbinder's *Tango-Film* company could have been able to secure its production without the television stations' incessant need to fill their programming schedules,[4] a need which Fassbinder could actually satisfy as the speed at which he turned out films was very high. Consequently, in spite of Fassbinder's misgivings about the West German subsidy system, a study of the financial side of his film production reveals 'a careful pattern of TV co-productions, commissioned work, films produced by his own company, subsidised films,

[3] Elsaesser, *New German Cinema*, p. 43.

[4] According to Knut Hickethier most of the small firms owned by new German filmmakers could only survive because of television's 'Gießkannenprinzip bei der Auftragsverteilung'. This principle intensified 'die Zersplitterung der Filmwirtschaft in viele kleine Firmen' with the positive side effect that 'diese Auftragsvergabe [ermöglichte], daß viele "Filmemacher" eigene Produktionsfirmen gründeten, damit wenigstens punktuell die Arbeitsteilung in der Filmproduktion ein Stück weit aufgehoben [wurde] und [sich] ... so neue Filme entwickeln konnten...' - Knut Hickethier, *Das Fernsehspiel der Bundesrepublik: Themen, Form, Struktur, Theorie und Geschichte 1951-1977* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1980), p. 16.

production grants and prizes'.[5]

However, as the legal framework thus created the conditions under which the various funding bodies and television stations were able to help new German filmmakers with the production of their films, Fassbinder, like other contemporary filmmakers, soon became aware of the problems which the distribution of his films posed. For the distribution market was dominated by big, mainly American companies which showed little interest in the films made by the new German filmmakers. As Irmela Schneider has shown, this situation in the field of film distribution came about in the consequence of the war, mainly because West Germany was not allowed to protect its film market by means of quotas. Thus, the *Motion Picture Export Association* (MPEA), a distribution cartel which had been founded in 1945 by the major American film companies in order to represent and push through American interests in foreign markets, found it easy to disclose a new market when the American film industry had to cope with the consequences of the introduction of public service television at home. Consequently, foreign film markets like West Germany's served as a kind of security valve for the American film industry as it struggled to come to terms with the new situation the advent of television had brought about.[6]

Given this political and economic situation in the distribution market, the distribution of independent films was very difficult. Therefore the *Kuratorium Junger Deutscher Film*, an institution which was set up by the representatives of the Young German Cinema in 1964 in order to help young filmmakers with the financing of their first film, began as early as 1969 to put money aside to overcome the difficulties in the field of distribution. It was on this financial basis that in 1971 a group of filmmakers, among them Fassbinder, founded the *Filmverlag der Autoren*, a distribution company which they ran by themselves according to co-operative principles. Although German filmmakers thus had an institution at their disposal which was apt to represent their own interests in the market, it goes without saying that the balance of power between the major American companies and the *Filmverlag*

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[5] Thomas Elsaesser, 'The Postwar German Cinema', in *Fassbinder*, ed. by Tony Rayns (London: British Film Institute, 1980), pp. 1-16 (p. 15).

[6] Irmela Schneider, *Film, Fernsehen & Co.: Zur Entwicklung des Spielfilms in Kino und Fernsehen: Ein Überblick über Konzepte und Tendenzen* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1990), p. 33.

was everything but symmetrical. This was even more so since Hollywood attempted to fight the growing influence of television by means of a production and promotion concept which is largely summarised by the slogan 'Make them big, show them big, sell them big!'[7] Thus it does not come as a surprise that the company ran into financial difficulties in 1976, a development which Fassbinder responded to by taking his leave one year later. However, the fact that it was henceforth run as a joint-stock company did not prevent the filmmaker from having his films distributed by the *Filmverlag* anyway so that this company owns the distribution rights of twenty-nine of Fassbinder's films today.

Although the foundation of the *Filmverlag* made it easier for German filmmakers to distribute their films, Fassbinder, without making a big financial effort, found his own ways and means in and by which he could additionally promote his films. In keeping with the idea of the 'personal film' Fassbinder presented his films to the public as a direct result of his personal experiences and problems. Thus, he not only gave rise to numerous biographical interpretations of his work, but also placed himself in the limelight of public discussion: the director himself took part in the creation of what has come to be known as the 'Fassbinder legend'. This legend can be sketched as the image of a highly prolific loser. It centres around those traits of his personality which make him an outstanding and contradictory figure: his homosexuality, his class and (lack of) education, his political allegiance, his aesthetic originality and, above all, his amazing productivity.[8] Not surprisingly, this public image had an economic effect, as Günther Rohrbach points out when he stresses this image's publicity value:

> Fassbinder always had all the prerequisites to become a legend. The image of this provocative character moved the imagination of human beings. And it served the demands of publicity for the artist perfectly: the artist himself was part of his art.[9]

By directing the reception of his films towards the idea of personal experience and

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[7] Balio, 'Introduction to Part I', pp. 3-40 (p. 23).
[8] Shattuc, *Television, Tabloids and Tears*, p. 63.
[9] Günther Rohrbach, head of the WDR's drama department in the documentary film '... ich will doch nur, daß ihr mich liebt. Zum Tode Rainer Werner Fassbinders: Würdigungen von Mensch und Werk', quoted in Shattuc, *Television, Tabloids and Tears*, p. 60.

confession, the filmmaker put himself in opposition to Hollywood's success image while nevertheless having the necessary publicity, occupying a market slot over which he would not have to fight with any of the major international film companies. In doing so Fassbinder could take advantage of the - at the time - very fashionable notion of *Autorenfilm*: by means of his extreme openness and honesty in personal matters he took on the role of the Hollywood star as the main point of reference for the reception of his films.

Thus the social, legal and institutional conditions leave no doubt about the fact that Fassbinder's film production is firmly anchored in between the three audio-visual media of theatre, film and television. Taking advantage of the material and human resources which were available to him from the *antiteater* and financially supported by television stations and West Germany's generous funding bodies, Fassbinder developed his own market strategy in order to assert himself in the difficult competition with the mainstream Hollywood cinema. Even though he appears to have occasionally been very tired of the conditions under which he worked, he did not remain in an off-side position when it was necessary to protect and push through the interests of the German film in the 1970s, but involved himself in the creation of an institutional framework situation which would be favourable to the cause of the New German Cinema as whole. Thus, although the realisation of Fassbinder's ambition to reach a mass audience by creating the German Hollywood film appears unthinkable without the support he received from theatre and television, he and his films nonetheless remain an integral and indispensable part of the German film scene of the 1970s.

### III.1.2 Fassbinder's Production of 'Live' Films. Film Directing in the Aesthetic Grey Zone between Theatre, Film and Television

When Fassbinder returned to the medium of film in 1968 to produce his first full-length feature films, he did not resume the approach to film directing which was

characteristic of his early short films, but took the experiences he had had at the *Action Theater* into account. For it was here that Fassbinder, as he has pointed out himself, learned the art of directing.[10] However, since the technical and financial framework of film production differs considerably from that of the theatre, he could not simply carry his style of directing into film, but had to adjust it to the different conditions of the technical medium. These conditions are mainly determined by the greater technical and hence financial investment necessary for the production of a work of art. Consequently, in order to keep production costs as low as possible, Fassbinder had to modify his way of directing in a way which would allow him to work extremely efficiently. Curiously, the directing style, which thus emerged, took characteristics on board which are better known in the medium of television. As it is particularly the form of the live transmission which the filmmaker appears to have drawn on for his own purposes, media interplay also permeates the director's way of directing.

The efficiency of Fassbinder's directing style is due to a number of factors. Firstly, the editing concept for any particular film was usually ready before the begin of the shooting so that the director was able to stop the shooting of any individual scene roughly at the point where the cut was going to be made.[11] Having thus the sequence of shots in his head, Fassbinder, secondly, demanded of his actors that no scene ought to be taken more often than once.[12] This already demanding a lot of concentration on the part of the actors, Fassbinder sought to save even more time as he, thirdly, usually denied the possibility of rehearsing scenes before the shooting and was, finally, reckless in introducing new ideas which would often come as a complete surprise to the actors. As Peer Raben and Gottfried John relate, the pressure under which the actors worked was considerable: they would have to try and cope with certain unexpected aggravations in front of the running camera.[13] Similarly, Margit Carstensen remembers that Fassbinder was able to hand out a new, totally unknown text just before the shooting. Not surprisingly, the pressure for efficiency

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[10] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 20.
[11] Lorenz (ed.), *Das ganz normale Chaos*, pp. 422-423.
[12] Fassbinder's camera man Xaver Schwarzenberger in the documentary *Ich will nicht nur, daß ihr mich liebt* (I Do not only Want You to Love Me, 1992), dir. Hans-Günther Pflaum.
[13] Lorenz (ed.), *Das ganz normale Chaos*, pp. 80, 212.

was not designed to create a good work atmosphere; it ceaselessly gave rise to friction, emotional blackmail and 'exploitation' among the actors, which added even more pressure.

It almost goes without saying that such a way of working with the actors is only possible if one works with an ensemble which has worked together for a reasonably long time. In fact, as has previously been mentioned, many of the *antiteater* actors remained faithful to Fassbinder for the longest time of his artistic career. Not only during the early years of his film production *antiteater* actors like Hanna Schygulla, Kurt Raab, Günther Kaufmann, Ingrid Caven, and Irm Hermann, to name only a few, constituted a large part of the cast. Although Fassbinder soon invited friends and live companions like El Hedi ben Salem (*Ali - Fear Eats the Soul*, 1973) and Armin Meier (*I only want you to love me*, 1976; *Chinese Roulette*, 1976) to participate in the production of his films, engaged established actors from some of the major state-subsidised theatres (Margit Carstensen, Hamburg; Volker Spengler, Frankfurt), had his casts include stars of the commercial German cinema of the 1950s like for instance Karlheinz Böhm as well as of the international art cinema like Anna Karina (*Chinese Roulette*, 1976), Dirk Bogarde (*Despair*, 1977) and Jeanne Moreau (*Querelle*, 1982) - even Rommy Schneider was to be cast as Maria Braun in *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1978) - the fact that he mainly used his own actors also holds true for the later films. As the frequent use of the same actors ensured that the actors knew about the director's intentions and aspirations, the similarity of the films' casts is not only due to financial considerations, but must be considered an integral part of the director's way of film production.

Although the far-reaching stability of the cast thus fulfils a precondition without which Fassbinder's way of film shooting seems unthinkable, the strain on the actors was nonetheless so considerable that it quite 'naturally' resulted in a highly theatrical acting style. For as interviews with Irm Hermann, Hanna Schygulla, Margit Carstensen and Ingrid Caven testify, Fassbinder had a peculiar way of casting his films. Apparently, he selected those roles for his actors with which they could least identify:[14] Fassbinder, as Ingrid Caven has observed, 'hat die Leute in eine Art

[14] Gertrud Koch, 'Die Frau vor der Kamera: Zur Rolle der Schauspielerin im Autorenfilm', *October*, 35 (1983), 92-96.

Einsamkeit gestoßen.'[15] Feelings of aversion, claustrophobia and paralysis, in short the feeling of having been turned into an object, therefore appear to have been a common experience among the actresses. This kind of shock treatment was not applied without some artistic deliberation:

> Ihn hat die Form interessiert, das äußere Bild und die Art der Hysterie, wie man sich ausdrückt. Er hat besetzt nach Ausdrucksfähigkeit und nicht danach, wie die Person nun etwa sei in ihrer Identität mit sich selbst.[16]

In order to elicit those feelings which invoke the expression of non-identity and create an image of 'hysteria', the filmmaker made it difficult for the actors to merge with their roles. By casting his actors in roles which they did, by and large, not like, he made sure that they would always be emotionally engaged otherwise. As they therefore send out signals which are not part of the role, they create the impression of being constantly out of place: their performances are usually very slow and look very theatrical and in this sense unreal. Thus, Fassbinder created expressive possibilities in the field of acting which may not have been readily available to actors many of whom also followed up a career outside Fassbinder's theatre and film production.

Although the acting in Fassbinder's films thus appears as very theatrical, it does not result from a mechanical taking-over of techniques which he developed in the theatre, but emerges from his specific way of making use of the medium's own apparatus. For as the effect of the director's way of casting the actors, the one-take-per-shot-only way of shooting and the frequent refusal to rehearse is often additionally amplified by the director's predilection for long takes, the camera is turned into a weapon, a probe, which is introduced into the psyche of the actors when they are not entirely prepared for it. This often gives the acting a touch of instinctive 'spontaneity',[17] a spontaneity, however, which must be considered a symptom of the actors' acceptance of the role to be performed as something superior to themselves. While in the theatre the theatricality of the acting is largely achieved by means of choreography, in film it is the result of the intense pressure which the relentless eye

[15] Lorenz (ed.), *Das ganz normale Chaos*, p. 86.
[16] Koch, 'Die Frau vor der Kamera' 92-96 (p. 96).
[17] Peter Iden, 'Der Eindruck-Macher', pp. 17-28 (p. 18).

of the camera exercises on actors who are urged to identify with difficult roles. Thus, although ways and means are different in theatre and film, in both media the acting brings about a relationship between role and actor which largely follows the logic which Leo Braudy has pointed out as typical of the theatre: the actors are to subordinate to the role.[18]

It is interesting to note that the technique by means of which Fassbinder gives the acting in his films a theatrical air is itself quite alien to the medium of film. For as one of Fassbinder's camera men, Michael Ballhaus, has observed, Fassbinder's way of directing 'hat ... die Schauspieler in Situationen hineingetrieben, die nicht Kino waren'.[19] This statement can be taken quite literally. For as the insistence on the one-take-per-shot-only method of filming, the actors' relative lack of preparation caused by his frequent refusal to rehearse and the director's predilection for long takes, which often approximates theatre's use of real time,[20] introduces the existential dimension of a real life situation into his films, Fassbinder's technique puts the actors in a situation which resembles much more a television live transmission or a continuous theatre premiere than the shooting of a feature film. That this is no accident but the result of artistic deliberation is exemplified by Fassbinder's reply to Armin Müller-Stahl's request for stage directions during the shooting of *Lola* in 1981. The director merely replied: 'Wie im Theater, das wär' schön.'[21] As the psychological effect of public attention in difficult situations, which appears to be paramount to Fassbinder's directing, thus emerges from an approximation of theatre's / live television's modes of production, media interplay is at the heart of the

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[18] In his book *The World in a Frame* Leo Braudy writes: 'The tendency in stage acting is to subordinate oneself to the character, while the great film actor is generally more important than the character he plays.' - Leo Braudy, 'Acting: Stage vs. Screen', in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Gerald Mast et al. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 387-394 (p. 392).

[19] Lorenz (ed.), *Das ganz normale Chaos*, p. 196.

[20] In his article *Medienzeit - Beschleunigung und Verlangsamung* Knut Hickethier argues that whereas film 'verlegte die Beschleunigung in der Darstellung vom Darsteller weg in die Struktur des Films', the theatre 'entwickelte jetzt deutlicher Gegenpositionen zur Dynamik, zum Tempo der Zeit'. This is what Fassbinder transposes into his film which makes the critical observer realise that 'nur im Verzögern ... die Chance [besteht], falsche Entwicklungen auf ihre Anfänge zu beschränken und sie schließlich ganz zu stoppen. Langsamkeit schafft erst wieder die Zeit, kulturelle Verarbeitungsweisen Neuem gegenüber zu entwickeln.' In this sense we can understand practically all of Fassbinder's films as a warning and an opportunity at the same time. - Knut Hickethier, *Medienzeit - Beschleunigung und Verlangsamung*. Reihe Massenmedien und Kommunikation (Siegen: Gesamthochschule Siegen, 1986), p. 20.

[21] *Das ganz normale Chaos*, p. 396.

acting's theatricality in his feature films.

It is on the basis of such drawing on theatre's and television's mode of production that Fassbinder was able to work extremely efficiently and thus make up for the lack of financial resources. While the frequent refusal to rehearse with the actors obviously reduced the time needed for the preparation of the shooting, the director's elaborate editing conceptions and the one-take-per-shot-only way of filming not only reduced the amount of time needed for the shooting and the editing, but also limited the waste of film material and kept developing costs low, two expenditures which usually cover most of a low-budget film's expenses. This kind of financial and temporal economy enabled Fassbinder to complete the shooting of a full-length feature film within about 20 to 25 days so that the remaining time and money could now be spent on the production of subsequent films. Thus, it is no wonder that the speed at which the filmmaker turned out films has often been admired. More than 40 films in 13 years; seven films produced in 1970 alone - this is a balance which has rarely been matched by any other director. However, it has to be emphasised again that Fassbinder's efficiency was only possible because of the strong support which he received from his *antiteater* colleagues.

### III.1.3 How to Find One's Own Audience. Fassbinder's Film Œuvre between Hollywood and Television Aesthetics

Since the material, human and artistic recourses of the *antiteater*, the financial backing from television and the secure distribution through the *Filmverlag* enabled Fassbinder to realise his film projects with great efficiency, there is one more aspect, crucial to the film business, which the filmmaker had to worry about: his films' exhibition, i.e. the audience and how to reach it. For as Fassbinder distanced himself from the avantgardist *Gremienkino* as it is epitomised by the filmmakers of the young German cinema and instead set out to reach a mass audience, he not only relied on the effect of the publicity which surrounded his person, but also drew on

artistic strategies whose effectiveness with the audience had already been proved within different media environments. For on the one hand the director appears to have given his film work some of the structural features typical of a television soap opera and on the other hand he built up a Hollywood star system *en miniature*. As the filmmaker thus sought to increase his films' mass appeal by using strategies which had been developed by those institutions which dominate today's audio-visual culture, the principle of media interplay provides the basis for his attempt to attract a wider audience.

As Tony Pipolo has shown, it is the aesthetic interaction with the aesthetics of television soap operas which is most striking when one considers Fassbinder's film work as whole:

> [t]he small-scale intimacy, the addressing of a given problem, the confined scope of the drama, the accent on domestic and workplace relationships, the repetition of character types and familiar faces - all these are eminently familiar to audiences of television soap operas. Their ongoing theatricalized representation of everyday life provides the endless series of surrogate victims, not only as the cliché would have it, for the 'oppressed housewife,' but, as any survey of America's college campuses will confirm, for the young men and women on the threshold of social, marital and professional responsibility. An interaction of television drama and cinema aesthetics in most of Fassbinder's work intensifies the sense of familiarity which has facilitated his acceptance. [...] The range of questions addressed is largely prescribed by television soap opera and problem drama. Indeed Fassbinder's is the first cinema of international prestige to persistently tap the material and aesthetics of television, aggrandising them with a cinematic elegance.[22]

Obviously, if one considers the individual films in the context of the filmmaker's entire work, the thematic and formal links which come into view parallel those which are characteristic of the internal dramatic structure of television soap operas. However, the similarities between Fassbinder's film work and the aesthetics of soap operas can be taken even further than that.

Due to the principle of grass-root democracy, which the theatre commune of the *antiteater* aspired to establish - even though Fassbinder had already taken over and established his largely uncontested rule - the films were cast in such a way that

[22] Tony Pipolo, 'Bewitched by the Holy Whore', *October*, 21 (1982), 83-112 (pp. 92-93).

none of the actors would have reason to feel disadvantaged. This means above all that they took turns in playing the main, semi-important and minor roles in Fassbinder's films. Kurt Raab, for instance, plays the lead in the film *Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?* (1969), not more than a supporting role in *Whity* (1970), the semi-important role of the bishop in *The Niklashausen Journey* (1970), the supporting role of Herr Bauer in the film *Fear of Fear* (1975) and finally plays the lead again in the film *Satan's Brew* of 1976. Similarly, Hanna Schygulla plays an important role in the film *Gods of the Plague* (1969), a semi-important role in *Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?*, minor roles in *The Merchant of Four Seasons* (1971), and *Jail Bait* (1972) and is cast in the title roles of the films *Fontane Effi Briest* (1974) and *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1978). This kind of taking turns among the actors is characteristic of Fassbinder's entire film work. Thus, the director, as Pipolo remarks, creates a network of intertextuality 'with personal, social and artistic reverberations. [...] The importance of certain actors fluctuates from film to film, the lead actor in one narrative playing an identical or similar, but peripheral character elsewhere.'[23]

The basic principle of this artistic strategy is well-known from television soap operas. As one requirement of soap opera's dramaturgy is its open-endedness, the characters not only have to be exposed to a constant change of fortunes, but these ups and downs have to be intertwined in a way which facilitates countless continuations. Thus, whilst one character may rise to top form, another one may approach the lowest point of his career, while the next episode may already invert the situation. However, in the case of Fassbinder's films it is not the characters but the actors who are exposed to life's ups and downs. This modification facilitates the exploitation of what is essentially soap opera's repetitive dramaturgy and its usage across many individual feature films. As this parallel between the macrostructure of Fassbinder's film œuvre and the aesthetics of soap operas is supported by those many cross-references which Thomas Elsaesser has summarised recently - variations and apparent continuations of the same story lines, direct quotations as well as the steady recurrence of the name, and, by implication, the topic of Alfred Döblin's Franz Biberkopf[24] - Fassbinder's film aesthetics benefits from the re-cognition effect which

[23] Ibid., p. 110.
[24] Elsaesser, *Fassbinder's Germany*, p. 240.

the television series' dramaturgy thrives on.

However, Fassbinder not only modifies soap opera's dramaturgical principle, but also makes use of it with genuinely cinematic optics. For as he himself explains in one of his interviews, the director photographs his actors in a way which is apt to turn them into stars:

> Ich habe auch eine Haltung zu den Leuten so als Schauspieler. Ich habe also eigentlich von Anfang an, habe ich die Leute so behandelt und so gefilmt meiner Ansicht nach, als wären es halt Stars. [...] [N]icht einfach dadurch, daß man jemanden vor irgendeine Kamera stellt, wird er ein Star, sondern nur in einer bestimmten Funktion, in einem bestimmten Bild, in einer bestimmten Kamerabewegung. Wenn die Kamera nicht Hollywood ist, dann ist auch der Schauspieler, der fotografiert wird, nicht Hollywood.[25]

Fassbinder applies a specific kind of camera work and photography in order to raise his actors above the average, turn them into stars and thus give his films what Pipolo has called their 'cinematic elegance'. As the actors are thus placed on a level close to Gary Grant, Liz Taylor or Marilyn Monroe, the director, as he explains himself, puts his films in a genuinely cinematic tradition, a tradition which was started by the classical Hollywood cinema. Thereby he himself delivers the arguments which support Thomas Elsaesser's thesis that the repeated appearance of the same actors in Fassbinder's films results in the creation of a mini-Hollywood star system.[26] Consequently, the director not only draws on television soap opera's dramaturgy in order to reach the widest possible audience, but also on that strategy which was used very successfully by the classical Hollywood cinema in order to draw audiences into the cinemas.

In conclusion it should be emphasised once more that Fassbinder's ability to make use of television's and Hollywood's strategies of audience address is largely based on those possibilities which were available to him through his affiliation with the *antiteater*. It is only because the director could firmly rely on the actors he knew from this off-off-scene theatre that he was able to combine a structure of alternating ups and downs with the creation of a star system *en miniature*. Thus the persistent

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[25] Wiegand, 'Interview I', pp. 75-94 (pp. 79-80).
[26] Elsaesser, 'A Cinema of Vicious Circles', pp. 24-36 (p. 34).

reappearance of the by and large same actors, the focus on character interaction under the sign of the exploitation of feelings, the chamber-piece scale of the drama and the optics of a Hollywood camera make Fassbinder's films appear apt to cater for aesthetic tastes which have been shaped by the director's strongest competitors in the field of audio-visual media: television and Hollywood cinema. Drawing on those of their strategies which promise the widest possible mass appeal - serial dramaturgy and Hollywood star - Fassbinder seeks to give his theatre-based, off-beat cinema the chance to have a wide, popular audience.

## III.2

## Folk Play and *antiteater*. Fassbinder's Portrayal of the People's Apathy in *Katzelmacher*

### III.2.1 The Significance of the German Folk Play for Fassbinder's Early Film Work

The films made by Fassbinder in 1969 and 1970 are first and foremost concerned with one topic: the identity or near identity of the normal, middle class way of life and the milieu of the criminal. Attempting to collapse the moral oppositions established and codified by bourgeois law, Fassbinder approaches this subject from two sides in order to explore it: on the one hand he may show us that the criminal is everything but an outsider in the bourgeois world and present his crimes with the utmost naturalness, and on the other hand he confronts us with the everyday cruelties in what is normally considered the everyday life of the lower middle classes. Both approaches basically carry the same message, namely that middle class morals are little different from, or even better than the crimes it judges and condemns as different from itself. By thus confounding and questioning established moral standards Fassbinder sets out to find his own critical approach to the West German society of his time, a society whose miraculously successful economic development gave rise to a great deal of economic and social stability and complacency.

Despite its thematic consistency, this early period of Fassbinder's work comprises a considerable amount of genres. Among these, two genres can be identified which were made use of repeatedly and therefore seem to have more

significance for the understanding of Fassbinder's early films than the genres which were, in a kind of trial and error approach, rejected after the first attempt. These two genres find themselves in two different lines of tradition. Firstly, there are the films in the tradition of the *film noir*, in which Fassbinder presents the criminal as an average existence, and secondly, there are the films in the tradition of the folk play in which average people are shown to be as cruel and relentless as criminals. The films *Love is Colder than Death*, *Gods of the Plague*, and *The American Soldier* may be considered to belong to the first group, whereas *Katzelmacher*, *Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?*, *Pioneers in Ingolstadt* and *Jail Bait* make up the second group. Under the scope of the present approach it is above all the latter group of films which deserves our attention since it is here that the theatre appears to have had an decisive impact on the aesthetics of Fassbinder's films.

Fassbinder's fascination with the German folk play of the 1920s and those by Marieluise Fleißer in particular is first documented by the director's attempt to stage Fleißer's play *Pioneers in Ingolstadt* at the *Action Theater* in February 1968. However, Marieluise Fleißer was not fond of this idea as she had come under attack when the play was first put on stage by Brecht at the Berlin *Theater am Schiffbauerdamm* in 1929. Keen to have the play wiped out of the public memory, she tried to have Fassbinder's undertaking discontinued. However, despite her initial objections Fleißer and Fassbinder eventually reached an agreement and Fleißer consented to the staging of Fassbinder's new version of the folk play, a montage of scenes which Fassbinder called *Ingolstadt, for Instance* (Zum Beispiel Ingolstadt).[27] The staging of this play was an event of high significance as it indeed meant the beginning of a new era in German theatre. Fassbinder's production of *Ingolstadt, for Instance* initiated the rediscovery of the literary work of Marieluise Fleißer, who had almost been forgotten by the 1960s, and a revival of the German folk play in general, which lasted throughout the 1970s. Not surprisingly, Fassbinder subsequently called himself a 'Fleißer-Schüler'.[28]

However, unlike the development of the folk play of the 1920s, the revival of

[27] *Materialien zum Leben und Schreiben der Marieluise Fleißer*, ed. by Günther Rühle (Frankfurt/M. Suhrkamp, 1973), p. 251.
[28] Ibid., p. 404.

the folk play in the 1960s took place not only in the theatre but also involved the new media of film and television. Torsten Bügner has pointed out that the new German folk play of the 1960s and 70s developed in such a close interaction with the new media of film and television that it would be wrong simply to consider its revival a purely theatrical phenomenon.[29] As previously indicated, in this respect, too, Fassbinder was a trend-setter as films like *Katzelmacher* (1969) and *Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?* (1969) rank among the first attempts to carry the message and aesthetics of the new German folk play into the media of film and television. Bügner finds the reason for this development in the playwrights' endeavour to reach an audience as wide as possible. After all, these plays were not only written about the 'people', but also for the 'people'. Consequently, by using all the means and media at his disposal in order to popularise the issues in which the folk play deals, Fassbinder is very much in line with the developments which are typical of the revival of the new German folk play as a whole.

Within this framework it is undoubtedly the director's second full-length feature film *Katzelmacher* which deserves some detailed investigation. The film, whose first screening at the Mannheim Film Week in October 1969 marked the artist's breakthrough as a filmmaker and which is still remembered for its strength and formal consistency,[30] not only witnesses the filmmaker's wish to place himself in the tradition of the German folk play, but also gives valuable insights into Fassbinder's way of handling the different media. For while its dedication to Marieluise Fleißer expresses Fassbinder's admiration for and gratitude towards his precursor, the fact that the film is based on a play of the same name, which Fassbinder staged at the *Action Theater* one year earlier, in April 1968, makes it the director's first attempt to adapt one of his own plays for a different medium. Thus the selection of the film *Katzelmacher* not only provides the possibility to consider Fassbinder's appropriation of the German folk play, but also facilitates an exploration of how the director handles the transition of a play from the theatrical medium to the medium of film and in doing so puts his idea of the reciprocal

[29] Bügner, *Annäherungen an die Wirklichkeit*, p. 47.
[30] The film received five *Bundesfilmpreise* and the lable 'excellent' from the official rating office in Wiesbaden.

exchange of aesthetic means between theatre and film into practice.

### III.2.2 Adapting *Katzelmacher* for the Big Screen

As far as sujet, plot and theme are concerned, the film *Katzelmacher* follows the original folk play to a large extent. Like the play, the film concentrates on the issue of xenophobia in order to explore the vicious circle of social pressure and emotional frustration. Set in a small community of people, who rank quite low in the contemporary German hierarchy of respectability, both the play and the film show how the arrival of a foreign guest worker can upset the social life of an entire community. Frustrated by social conditions which deny much personal satisfaction, the members of the community react to the presence of the Greek worker Jorgos with all the narrow-mindedness and bitchiness which may be assumed of stereotypical representatives of lower-class people. As the atmosphere in the community thus gradually heats up, the foreigner becomes the victim of a climactic assault on his person. However, as this does not cause Jorgos to leave, he is eventually accepted and integrated under the sign of economic profit and exploitation. Since the topic of emotional exploitation is thus not only rendered on the basis of a typical folk play sujet, but also plotted in a straightforward and unpretentious way, film and play *Katzelmacher* evidently share the aesthetic tradition of the German folk play.

However, although the play's folk play character clearly provides the basis for the film, the fact that it is carried from one medium into another demands a number of structural changes. This is not only because the original medium's set of representational means do not always intersect with that of the target medium, but also because the aesthetic effect of the same device used is relative to the different media's representational conventions. Thus, although the play *Katzelmacher*, like most of Fassbinder's plays, mixes theatrical with filmic and televisual devices, a simple filming of the play's arrangements is forestalled. The claustrophobic effect of keeping all actors onstage throughout the performance, for instance, has, in the

cinema, due to its less static mode of representation, to be brought about in a different way. Similarly, filmic devices like the brevity of the play's about fifty scenes and the double change of light in between them may lose their effect when they are carried back into the technical medium. For close-up and fade, in terms of which these devices can be interpreted,[31] are here part of the standard repertoire of artistic devices and as such not necessarily carrier of a special signal. Thus, the play's filmic and theatrical elements have equally to be replaced by stylistic equivalents if the play's message and aesthetic effect are to be secured in the technical medium.

As the technique of adaptation thus partly undermines the original folk play's aesthetics, the search for aesthetic equivalents in the medium of film does not work against the play's message and aesthetic effect, but actually helps support them. Fassbinder's endeavour to find aesthetic equivalents in the medium of film leads him to shift the focus away from the main character and towards the socio-psychological dynamics between the members of the small community. Thus, the play's circularity, which emerges from Jorgos's loss of innocence as he himself reveals xenophobic feelings when the arrival of a Turkish guest worker is announced towards the end, is carried into the film by means of a highly repetitive structure which oscillates between an apathetic lack of personal satisfaction on the one hand and social pretence on the other. Thus, although the film does certainly not reinstate the romanticised image of lower class innocence which the genre of the folk play sets out to deconstruct and actually draws a bleaker image of lower-class life than the play, the focus on the constrains of the social conditions in the community gives the characters some of their innocence back and shows them as for what they are: oppressors and victims at the same time.

It is for the artistic rendition of the film's ritualistic aesthetics that Fassbinder puts the idea of the aesthetic reciprocity between theatre and cinema into practice and makes it the guiding principle for his adaptation.[32] As far as the film's structure is concerned two complementary movements in the process of adaptation can be identified. First, Fassbinder disentangles the complexity of the play's dramatic conflict so that the film features a development in stages, and second, he slightly

[31] Rühle (ed.), *Materialien zum Leben und Schreiben der Marieluise Fleißer*, p. 254.
[32] See section I.2.2 for relevant quotation.

adjusts the dramatic structure of *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* to the subject-matter of *Katzelmacher* and applies it to the film. As Fassbinder's method of adaptation thus reduces what is theatrical about the play's structure in favour of more cinematic fluidity and at the same time transposes the highly complex montage structure which he himself developed in the theatre in order to replace the play's mere succession of scenes, the play's filmic and theatrical elements indeed find themselves in a reciprocal relationship to those of the film. By means of such media interplay Fassbinder's method of adaptation warrants the preservation of that element of brushing against the grain of the medium which is already contained in the original play.

Whereas the play immediately enters into the dramatic conflict as it starts at the point of Jorgos's arrival, the film first sets the scene. Fassbinder adds the first 47 scenes at the beginning of the film in order to introduce the spectator to the community's internal problems, frustration and hopes. The group of young people regularly meet in the backyard of some tenement house where they hang out together to kill their time, spread rumours, be bitchy to one another and otherwise be bored. Gradually the spectator begins to realise what the relationships between the different members of the group are like. The group essentially consists of four couples and one single. Marie (Hanna Schygulla) is going out with Erich (Hans Hirschmüller), who dreams of an income of 10.000 Deutschmarks per annum; Paul (Waldemar Brem), who acts as a homosexual prostitute for Klaus (Hannes Gromball), sleeps with Helga (Lilith Ungerer), who, in return, tries to trick him into a marriage; Franz (Harry Baer) pays for sex with Rosy (Elga Sorbas), who acts as her own pimp as she is determined to have a career in film and television production, while Peter (Peter Moland) lets himself be mothered by Elisabeth (Irm Hermann), who has to finance their common household. Finally, there is Gunda (Doris Mattes), who is so embarrassed about being a single that she makes up stories about a boyfriend who is far away on installation work. As the addition of the first 47 scenes thus draws attention to the characters' lack of satisfaction, it becomes clear that the film's main conflict arises from the character's frustration with their living conditions.

The tendency to put more emphasis on the internal problems of the group also

holds true for the second part of the film, at the beginning of which the Greek guest-worker (Fassbinder himself) joins the group. For although his presence unleashes a wave of malicious rumours and thus dominates the course of the story,[33] Fassbinder, in the process of adaptation, deselects all those plot elements which would be liable to locate the main dramatic conflict between the guest-worker and the backyard community. Like in the play, there is talk about an alleged sexual relationship between him and his landlady, Elisabeth; however, Fassbinder omits their visit to church, an event which could justify such rumours. Similarly, the seed of doubt contained in the rumours about Jorgos's assault on Erich is only spread in the play, not in the film. As Jorgos is thus turned into an almost purely passive character, the film, more than the play, traces Jorgos's effect on his environment back to his mere being foreign. Thus, very early in his artistic career Fassbinder developed a motif which has already been identified in the context of *Garbage, the City and Death* and which appears and reappears several times throughout his work: the motif of the catalyst.

As Jorgos's character thus attracts less attention than in the play, the film's dramaturgy largely concentrates on the group dynamics, which result from the main character's catalytic presence. For in contrast to the play Fassbinder expands on the internal dynamics of the community to such an extent that the spreading of rumours about Jorgos is shown to set off a comprehensive reformation of the group. While the rumours about Jorgos's and Elisabeth's affair prompt Elisabeth's boyfriend Peter to seek comfort with other women, Marie, who defends Jorgos against Gunda's accusations, eventually falls in love with the guest-worker and starts a relationship with him. Now it is her boyfriend Erich who tries to comfort himself by means of brief affairs, first with Helga and then with Rosy. Evidently, although the developing relationship between Jorgos and Marie contains the only utopian element in the film, it does not take up as much attention as it does in the play. The internal dynamics of the backyard community retain a good deal of our attention, a fact which ensures that the climactic assault on the guest-worker is primarily traced back to the characters' backyard situation and their frustrated aspirations.

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[33] Hans-Jürgen Greif, *Zum modernen Drama* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1975), p. 61.

That the reduction of Jorgos's character goes hand in hand with the increased interest in the backyard community's internal dynamics is also confirmed by the events which follow the climactic assault on the guest-worker. For as has been mentioned previously, the assault in the film is not followed by Jorgos's confirmation of the backyard community's values: whilst in the play Jorgos shows signs of xenophobia himself when the arrival of a guest worker from Turkey is announced, the film's Jorgos, as there is no such announcement, does not show any signs which would translate the play's circular structure into the film directly. Instead, the film restricts itself to show how Jorgos's catalytic effect is neutralised: after initial hopes for Jorgos's departure are disappointed, the backyard community understand that the guest-worker can economically be exploited and that this exploitation is good for Germany. Thus, just like other aspects of the play's adaptation, the film's ending is marked by a reduction in the main character's dramatic complexity, a fact, which facilitates greater scrutiny of the nature of the backyard community, its internal dynamics and their approach to life.

Consequently, all the changes adopted in the process of adaptation - the delayed entry of the main character, the reduced complexity of Jorgos's character, and the focus on the successive reformation of the group - reduce the dramatic complexity of the play and bring about a more epic development in stages. Thereby Fassbinder's restructuring of the story introduces an element of an - albeit rudimentary - linearity and fluidity into the film which accords with what Siegfried Kracauer has termed the filmmaker's 'concern with cinematic subjects'.[34] Kracauer describes this concern as 'cinematic elaborations which have the function of adjusting the theatrical intrigue to the medium'[35] and shows that they often extend 'the theatrical story in the direction of camera life'[36] so as to avoid 'complex units [which] interfere with cinematic narration'.[37] Thus, Fassbinder's focus on the social situation in the courtyard helps adjust the original play to the conditions of cinematic representation. As a side effect, this adjustment is also what gives the film the format

[34] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Oxford, London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 224.
[35] Ibid., p. 225.
[36] Ibid., p. 223.
[37] Ibid., p. 220.

of a full-length feature film.

As the reduction in dramatic complexity thus adjusts the play's plot to the conventions of filmic representation, theatrical elements are re-introduced on a different, genuinely filmic plane: montage. Unlike the play, the film consists of a rhythmic assemblage of three different types of scenes. Firstly, there are those scenes which concentrate on the individual couples. These scenes are usually set in the private sphere of one of the characters' sitting or bedrooms and tell us about the characters' private lives, the nature of their relationships, their real concerns and worries. The second kind of scenes, the 'group pictures' show the apathy and bitchiness which their lack of satisfaction and happiness brings about: between two and seven of the characters 'hang out' together in the courtyard of a tenement house, killing their time. The third group of scenes I would like to name 'walks across the courtyard': two characters walk down the backyard arm in arm as if it was a cat walk: what we see and hear is the facade of their personalities, the image which they would like to convey of themselves, the staging of an official personality. As each of these scenes consist of exactly one shot, the film, which is 88 minutes long, consists of only 115 shots, making the average shot of the film about 46 seconds long.

This rhythmic assemblage of different kinds of scenes is strongly reminiscent of *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*'s television programming-inspired montage structure. If the different types of scenes which constitute the film *Katzelmacher* can therefore be put into relation to the *Materialgruppen* which constitute the play, one can say that the 'group pictures' share the *contres*' interest in the social aspect of life, the scenes concentrating on the various couples provide background information like the play's short narratives, and the 'walks across the courtyard' convey that will for self-stylisation which is also to be found in the *pas des deux*. Although there is no equivalent for the *liturgiques* in the film, I think the similarities are substantial enough to justify the comparison between the film and the play, which was premiered just a few months before the production of *Katzelmacher*. That this structure, which was developed in interaction with television aesthetics, indeed caters for aesthetic tastes which have emerged from television consumption is confirmed by the Wim Wenders's impression of the film:

> Das Grauenvolle an diesem Film ist, daß er bis ins kleinste Detail lustlos ist. Die Schnitte sind wie ein mißmutiges Wechseln vom ersten zum zweiten Programm am Samstagabend, wenn einen jeder neuerliche Programmwechsel nur noch wütender und trauriger macht.[38]

Although Wenders makes a special mode of television watching, channel-hopping, the criterion for his comparison between Fassbinder's film and television aesthetics, the aesthetic principle, on which he bases his judgement, is essentially the same as in TV programming: the succession of different types of programmes on the basis of a repetitive pattern. Consequently, the narrative structure of *Katzelmacher* is based on the transposition of television's structural pattern from the theatre where it was first isolated as an aesthetic device and implemented in *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*.

However, although Fassbinder's implementation of television's structure in *Katzelmacher* largely follows the pattern of *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*, its transposition into the medium of film puts it into a different aesthetic context which entails a different aesthetic effect. Since *Katzelmacher* employs the play's montage structure by turning it into a series of sequence shots, the televisual structure now achieves a theatrical rather than filmic or televisual effect: the play's snapshot-like scenes are turned into drawn-out sequences. As the film's scenes thus employ real time, the temporal structure of the film is, as it approximates one of the three traditional unities of theatrical representation, much closer to the representational conventions of the theatre than to those of the cinema. Consequently, whilst the brevity of the play's scenes has been interpreted in terms of film's aesthetic influence on the theatre because it comes close to the effect of a close-up, the film's scenes, due to the economy of the editing, invoke the impression of theatrical long-windedness. Paradoxically, it is the apparently direct re-transposition of a filmic device from the theatre into film which brings this effect about.

As the film's ritualistic structure thus emerges from the director's method of having the media of theatre and film enter into a relationship of aesthetic reciprocity, it is by means of media interplay that Fassbinder succeeds in externalising the characters' internalisation of social standards. Although Jorgos's catalytic effect on the backyard community is strong enough to make them spread malicious rumours

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[38] Quotation in Roth, 'Kommentierte Filmographie' pp. 119-270 (p. 125).

about him and even reconsider their own relationships, these elements of linear development, which result from the reduction of dramatic complexity, never upset the framework provided by the montage's rhythm. As the specific use of the rhythmic montage structure in the film can therefore be compared with *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*'s structural variability, which equally fails to make a real difference, it arrests the film in a circularity which is analogous to Jorgos's adoption of his environment's value standards in the play. Thus it becomes obvious that the characters have fallen prey to the rituals of everyday life to the extent that they appear as impenetrable as fate. As this externalisation of the characters' state of mind is achieved on the basis of a device which is transposed from the theatre where it was developed in interaction with television aesthetics, the structure of Fassbinder's second full-length feature film is in line with the overall stylistic principle of his work in that it helps bring about a correspondence between two structures of internalisation on the film's thematic and formal levels.

### III.2.3 Fassbinder's Vision of Lower Class Apathy - The Implementation of *anti-teater*'s Acting Style in a Feature Film

The acting in Fassbinder's *Katzelmacher* is very much indebted to the acting style which the director developed together with the *antiteater* troupe and which has already been considered in the context of *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*. This is not surprising because the play and the film were not only produced in the same year, but also share a common interest in the social reproduction of certain patterns of behaviour. For as the underdogs of the backyard community reject their petty-bourgeois life, which offers no prospects, and instead dream of wealth and social respectability, they seek to assume the image which comes closest to their dream and keep repeating it. In particular the 'walks across the courtyard' make it quite clear that the backyard characters make a considerable effort to appear more assertive and self-assured than they actually are. As the acting thus indicates that the characters'

social behaviour is largely based on a process which is best described by the term of imitation, the acting style in *Katzelmacher*, just like in *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*, reflects a concept which has coined the notion of theatrical representation ever since Aristotle's *Poetics*.

However, as the characters imitate the image they would like to convey of themselves rather than act out their emotions, that part of the art of acting, which States has called the self-expressive mode, is almost entirely repressed. Thereby the acting becomes so apathetic that the characters appear to dry out: they do not 'seize the day' to follow up their own interests and motives, but rather linger on, accept the constraints which the social environment imposes upon them and find emotional relief in being bitchy to one another. Thus, although most of the characters are just waiting to get out of the backyard, all they achieve is the maintenance of the status quo of subjective inauthenticity. Given this situation, it does not come as a surprise that the characters neither develop nor show any kind of individuality; their lives are static and blend into one another. The only exception from this rule are Marie and Jorgos, whose love affair does betray some emotional investment, particularly on Marie's side. However, as this affair provides an image of happiness, which suffers considerably in the consequence of the assault on Jorgos, life in the backyard appears even bleaker than before.

As the emotional detachment of the characters thus prevents a proper imitation of action, it does not impair the rendition of reproductive behaviour, but actually supports its representation. For the highly apathetic way of human interaction in the film makes the reproduction of social patterns of behaviour recognisable as for what it is: a chimera with no justification other than social convention. For the constant repetition of the three main behavioural patterns, killing time alongside the railing in the courtyard, dreaming of the insignia of wealth and happiness, and pretending assertiveness and respectability during a walk down the courtyard fragmentises the characters' personalities to the effect that they no longer appear to be in control of their own lives. Instead, it appears to be the fact that these behavioural patterns are equally observed by all the characters which maintains their validity. As the reproduction of the behavioural patterns thus enters into a viscous

circle, the principle of imitation is short-circuited. Thus, *Katzelmacher*, very much like *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*, represents a social model in which the apparently self-sufficient circulation of a set of behavioural patterns creates a world of its own.

As the acting style in *Katzelmacher* is thus determined by the same issues as in *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*, its concrete artistic rendition, too, has a lot in common with the play of the same year. Just like in the play, Fassbinder imposes his choreography on the characters to the effect that they cease to control the spatial and temporal dimensions of the performance and instead appear to be controlled by them. For as the choreography keeps the characters in by and large static, tableau-like arrangements, which stress the characters' will for self-representation, it essentially establishes space as a frame with all its restrictive implications. As the characters are thus more concerned with the outer limits of their existence than with each other, the lack of interaction makes time itself gain an obscure power over them: it locks them into a continuous present without past or future. As the choreographic acting style in the film thus appears to create a unified space as well as a certain sense of unity of time, its artistic effect is, although it is diametrically opposed to that in the play *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*, in which choreographic devices are used to destroy any impression of unified space and present, highly theatrical. Consequently, the principle of media interplay clearly provides the basis for the acting style in *Katzelmacher*.

Emphasising the characters' will for self-representation, the choreographic acting style establishes space as a frame. Be it the 'group pictures' in the courtyard, the scenes set in the characters' private sphere or the 'walks across the courtyard', the characters usually position themselves as if they were about to be photographed: they often arrange themselves within the frame in a way that they are all equally well perceptible. Often enough this kind of positioning goes along with a straight look into the camera, an activity for which they even line up in the 'group pictures'. That the characters' self-representation is the main purpose of the acting also holds true for the sparse character movements in the film. Especially the characters' rather traditional carriage during the 'walks across the courtyard' makes it quite clear that they are primarily concerned with their own appearance rather than with the person

who accompanies him or her. Thus it is not surprising that the assault on Jorgos too is much more staged than carried out: the guest-worker collapses although the punches are merely indicated. As the choreography thus leaves no doubt that the main motivation for the characters' behaviour is to be perceived by a third party, it establishes space as something like a photographic frame.

Thus creating space as something determined by the limits, which are imposed by the frame, the choreographic acting style's aesthetic effect is much more theatrical than filmic. For it is here, in the theatre that all interaction between the characters takes place within the static frame provided by the proscenium arch so as to warrant optimal visibility of the events to be represented. Moreover, given the fact that in the theatre actors and spectators share the same room, this spatial arrangement also gives the actors the possibility to acknowledge the framework conditions of theatrical representation and occasionally address the audience directly in a monologue or an aside. However, in order to elicit this awareness of a third party observing the events represented in the medium of film Fassbinder turns the relationship between representation and framework conditions on its head and integrates the static frame as an awareness into the acting itself: the characters arrange themselves within the frame in a way that their concern with being perceived becomes obvious. As this tends to break open what could otherwise be a self-contained fiction and draws attention to representation itself, the choreographed use of space gives the film a highly theatrical air.

As the choreography emphasises the characters' will for self-representation, it also minimises their interaction to such an extent that they appear to have lost all agency to time itself. No matter which of the three types of scenes is considered, the characters' immobility is such that they hardly ever react to one another. Moreover, eye contact between the characters is generally avoided as well. Instead, they pass on time by lingering in the courtyard, the men usually staring into the distance, the girls checking their lipstick or combing their hair. Even when they have had sex with one another, play cards in the pub or practice for their future career they remain physically immobile and separated. Against this background the exhibited togetherness of the couples walking arm in arm across the courtyard is no more than

a lie, while the assault on Jorgos, as it is merely imitated, can not be called a form of human interaction either. As this kind of non-interaction is represented in real time, time constitutes itself as a rather sticky, continuous present without any past and certainly no future: the camera insists, the editing is delayed but the characters are not able to make use of the amount of time (and freedom) allocated.

Turning the flow of time into a continuous present, Fassbinder's choreography creates a temporal structure, which is more typical of theatrical than filmic representation. For as the theatrical mode of representation relies on the idea of presence, every action to be represented on the stage is, by definition, represented now, i.e. in the present. As a consequence, theatrical representation is normally based on the use of real time so that the scenes to be staged in the theatre are often considerably longer than their filmic counterparts. However, whilst in the theatre the use of real time is the direct result of presence, the impression of a continuous present in Fassbinder's film is conversely the result of non-interaction depicted in real time. In the theatre, the long-windedness of real time is thus made up for by a gripping sense of 'here and now'; in Fassbinder's film this sense is not only lost due to the film apparatus's mediation, but outright driven out by the director's implementation of his choreographic acting style. As *Katzelmacher*'s drawn-out sequences are thus 'unsupported' in a medium which otherwise thrives on speed, the characters' choreographed inaction gives the film's use of time a leaden weight which exceeds any theatrical production.

Since Fassbinder's transposition of the *antiteater*'s choreographic acting style into film shows the extent to which the characters have surrendered to the social conditions in the courtyard, it is by means of media interplay that the director is able to convey the internalisation of social patterns of behaviour. While the spatial arrangements show on the one hand that the characters have resorted to narcissistic self-representation in order to escape the bleak reality of the backyard, the apathetic lack of interaction, which deprives them of any sense of present, demonstrates to what extent the reality of the backyard nonetheless holds them in its claws. As the chimera-character of the constant reproduction of social patterns of behaviour is thus externalised by artistic devices which have been transposed from the theatre, the

acting style in *Katzelmacher* contributes to the realisation of that stylistic principle which is characteristic of Fassbinder's entire work: the correspondence between two structures of internalisation on the film's thematic and formal levels. Just as the acting succeeds in conveying the character's internalisation of the social conditions under which they live, so it is characterised by the taking on board of artistic devices which originate from media other than film.

### III.2.4 The Artificiality of Language: Carrying *antiteater*'s Linguistic Practice into Film

Very much in line with the aesthetic tradition of the German folk play, Fassbinder's use of language in *Katzelmacher* does not follow the High German standard, but is full of idiosyncrasies which by and large betray a regional, that is mainly Bavarian flavour. Such inflection of the language used not only identifies the characters as the inhabitants of the south German province, but also provides the potential for immediate emotional expression. In fact, the title of the film is a clear indication for dialect's expressive possibilities. 'Katzelmacher' is a derogative Bavarian slang word, which originally denoted the producers of wooden *Gatzeln* (ladles) from the valley Grödnertal in the Alps. As a people's etymology it later came to be applied to guest-workers from southern countries, who allegedly father children like cats ('Katzen' in German).[39] Dialect invites authentic emotional expression more readily than the standard because it harks back on the collective experience of a more or less closed, traditional community. Consequently, the origin-ality of dialect language gives its implementation in a work of art the potential to convey the authenticity of provincial life as it is typical of the folk play genre.

However, although the use of language in *Katzelmacher* follows the tradition of the German folk play, the way in which it is made use of deviates from this tradition. For as the relationships between the characters in the backyard are mainly

[39] Ibid., pp. 119-270 (p. 127).

characterised by apathy and narcissism, they apparently do not believe in the value of communication. Communication in the backyard is not inspired by the wish to relate to one another, but rather by the idea of putting oneself forward, a fact which makes the verbal utterances in the film appear rather intransitive. With the exception of Marie once she has fallen in love with Jorgos, none of the characters takes a real interest in another person. Thus, the way the characters communicate in the backyard does not come anywhere close to building up the strong emotional and communal bonds which are characteristic of traditional communities. Although Fassbinder's backyard community, too, represents a more or less closed local community, their use of the Bavarian dialect in *Katzelmacher* characerises them as socially uprooted; the general atmosphere of social alienation denies the possibility of authentic emotional expression, which traditional communities encourage.

As the intransitive character of language use which is detectable in the characters' speech deprives dialect language of its emotional expressiveness, the emotional detachment highlights the dialectal inflection of the characters' verbal interaction. For as the characters' emotional detachment has hollowed out the characters' language use to such an extent that it sheds all those features which characterise it as living language, the Bavarian dialect as it is used in *Katzelmacher* is turned into an artificial language.[40] It is no longer an elastic form ready for development and creative usage, but an empty vessel and rigid system which, as it is freed from its communal basis, develops its own intra-systematic dynamics. Thereby the organic process of linguistic change and development is perverted into a mechanic game of systematic deformation rather at the expense of those syntactic and semantic relationships on which every communication depends. As this deformation largely expands on linguistic features which are characteristic of the Bavarian dialect, one is faced with the paradoxical situation in which the probably most authentic of linguistic forms is turned into an artificial language. It is this linguistic artificiality which makes the use of dialect difficult to miss in the film.

This phantom character of the dialect used by the characters is brought about

[40] That this effect was actually intended by the director and his troupe is indicated by Fassbinder's statement: 'Wir wollten die bayerische Sprache als Kunstprodukt einsetzen.' - Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 22.

by artistic techniques which Fassbinder developed in the *antiteater* and which are highly reminiscent of those already discussed in the context of *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*. However, since the tradition of the German folk play gives the language use in the film a different context, a different way of discussing them suggests itself. Accordingly, linguistic stylisation in *Katzelmacher* encompasses three aspects of language use, namely a qualitative aspect, a quantitative one and a contextual one. Firstly, the morphology, syntax and the semantics of the Bavarian dialect are exaggerated to the point of distortion; secondly, the verbal exchanges among the characters are considerably slowed down and delayed; and finally, any utterance which appears as remotely authentic is commented upon by means of music and other noises which are assembled onto the soundtrack. As all these different ways of suppressing the semantic and pragmatic relationships, which make any 'real' communication possible, can be related to techniques as they are known from the modern media of film and television, it is by means of media interplay that Fassbinder brings about the film's peculiar non-interactive mode of verbal interaction.

The undoubtedly most striking means used to stylise the use of language in the film is the morphological, syntactic and semantic distortion of the German language. The characters frequently apply the indefinite article to nouns which do not normally take an article in German, for instance: 'Einen Durst hab ich.', 'Ein Geld mußt mir geben.' or 'Eine Vorsicht muß sein.' Furthermore, the infinitive with 'zu' is frequently turned into a noun which is preceded by a contraction of the preposition 'zu' and the respective article: 'Wir sind nicht zum Haben für jeden', says Gunda, and Elisabeth's statement: 'Eine Liebe oder so, das hat immer mit Geld was zum Tun', features the same structure. Other features are the double negation within one sentence ('Der hat auch keinen Geschmack nicht'), the replacement of the affirmative 'doch' by 'genau' and the frequent use of the subordinate clause's syntactical structure (with the finite verb at the end) in an isolated main clause: 'Daß eine Ordnung wiederkehrt-'. As the idiosyncrasies of the Bavarian dialect are thus exaggerated and heightened to the effect that the syntactic and semantic breaks inhibit the flow of the conversation, attention is drawn to the act of pronunciation

itself and language tends to become intransitive.[41]

Although this kind of language use is not essentially different from that in the original play, the reference to Fassbinder's own theatre practice is not sufficient to explain this aspect of the film's linguistic side. For while Fassbinder indeed transposes entire text passages of the play into his film, the principle of language deformation itself appears to have been developed under the influence of television. For as Michael Patterson has observed, the deliberate distortion of the German language is at least partly due to

> the [...] immediate effect of television. German theatre, more than most, has tended to talk in a language, High German, and act in a style that is (for want of a better word) 'theatrical', i.e. strikingly different from the language and behaviour from the man in the street. The realism and close-up technique of film and television have made the German theatregoer especially aware of dialogue and gesture that exist on stage and nowhere else. Significantly, most of the authors..., notably Walser, Ziem, Fassbinder and Kroetz, have written for television.[42]

However, while television may indeed have made playwrights like Fassbinder aware of the artistic possibilities offered by the use of non-standard language, Fassbinder's implementation of dialect language goes well beyond any attempt at introducing 'naturalness' into the theatre. Instead, it is aimed at abolishing dialect's regional anchorage by exaggerating it to the degree of artificiality.[43] Having thus developed his own approach to language use in the theatre, it is from here that Fassbinder carries it into the medium of film. Like for the film's structure, theatre functions as a kind of relay station between television's new aesthetic forms of representation on the one side and Fassbinder's film production on the other.

While the qualitative aspect of language use jeopardises the flow of living language by exaggerating regional particularities, the quantitative aspect achieves a

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[41] For more information about Fassbinder's use of language, see Anne Betten, *Sprachrealismus im deutschen Drama der 70er Jahre* (Heidelberg, Carl Winter, 1985), pp. 302-305.

[42] Michael Patterson, *German Theatre Today* (London: Pitman Publishing, 1976), p. 89.

[43] Significantly, Fassbinder's characters avoid those features of the Bavarian dialect, which come too close to reality and may therefore be emotionally charged. They always pronounce a High German 'ich' instead of a Bavarian 'i'. Besides, the typical Bavarian interjections, without which no realistic representation of provincial life can do, are missing from the language used in *Katzelmacher*. Obviously, Fassbinder is not interested in the use of the dialect as a naturalist asset.

similar effect by means of pauses of silence of varying length. Starting and maintaining a conversation seems to require a deliberate effort on the part of the characters. Sentences are dropped one by one which frequently results in long pauses of silence between the various utterances. Such communicative behaviour tends to cut the connections between the individual speech acts so that questions and answers, for instance, do frequently not appear to share in the same logic. As the time gaps in between the individual utterances therefore have an isolating effect and are thus liable to break down the flow of the communication, the meaningful connections between the utterances make way for a succession of individual statements which are put next to, if not against one another. Language is spread out across the film giving the impression that it has neither a beginning nor an end. For as the communication between the characters never really starts, it has always already started. Thus, whenever a new sequence starts, the spectator appears to join an ongoing 'conversation'.

Such communicative behaviour is not only known from Fassbinder's own theatre practice - Karl-Heinz Assenmacher has noted that the *Action Theater*'s performance of *Katzelmacher* gives the impression that 'ständig in ein schon begonnenes Gespräch eingeblendet wird',[44] - but also of the aesthetics of television soap operas. For as television soap operas aim at the illusion of different coexisting mini-realities, it uses language in a way which suggests that the various conversations between the characters form an ongoing flow which the camera joins or leaves at the random of the editing. However, while television is careful not to upset the conversational logic within each segment, Fassbinder, having identified the device and transposed it into his theatre practice, uses it to stress the lack of alertness on the part of the characters and the consequent loss of any real interaction. Consequently, Fassbinder's own theatre practice needs to be considered in the context of television's aesthetic influence if the origin of the film's way of implementing language in time is to be explained. This, in turn, makes the director's own theatre practice again appear as a kind of relay station for the transposition of artistic devices into the medium of film.

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[44] Karl-Heinz Assenmacher, 'Das engagierte Theater des Rainer Werner Fassbinder', in *Sprachnetze*, ed. by Gerhard Charles Rump (Hildesheim, New York: Olms, 1976), 1-86 (pp. 13ff).

The impression that the quantitative and qualitative deformation of language use is indeed geared towards the suppression of authentic emotional expression is supported by those passages of the film in which the characters' utterances pretend or indeed come close to authentic expression. While the pretentious dialogues of the 'walks across the courtyard' are commented upon by the assemblage of Schubert's *Sehnsuchtswalzer*, those scenes which show Jorgos and Marie as a loving couple are marked by a noisy intrusion of the outside world. When the couple share the same bench in the countryside in the 92nd scene, Marie and Jorgos may have been able to leave the world of the courtyard, but the volume of the background noises has dangerously increased. Apparently the voices of the characters have to struggle for self-assertion against an obstinate social reality which threatens to intrude upon their relationship.[45] Thus, assembled sound puts the characters' dialogues into perspective because it stresses the vulnerability and loneliness behind any impression of togetherness, be it pretended or real. In doing so, the assemblage of sound pursues the same goal as the quantitative and qualitative distortion of the characters' language use.

This device, too, is not unfamiliar from Fassbinder's theatre practice and the performance of *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* in particular. It is reminiscent of that English text passage in the play, which is assembled into the play by means of playback. However, as will be shown in more detail in the final chapter on Fassbinder's cinema work, this way of commenting upon language, too, emerged from a close interaction with television aesthetics in so far as televisions' mode of applying sound triggered off a new round of experimenting with sound in the older media. Thus it is again via his own theatre practice that Fassbinder carries a device into the medium of film whose implementation appears to be inspired by television's mode of representation. This, however, involves an aesthetic inversion of its function which is due to the difference between the two media. Whereas the assemblage of a recorded text brushes the theatre against the grain in so far as it destroys the illusion

[45] It is not before the second half of the 1970s that Fassbinder pays more attention to the aesthetic possibilities offered by the soundtrack. The crucial final scene of *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, for instance, uses several layers of sound with the most important message delivered in the lowest volume. However, it is interesting to note that the foundation for this method of using sound was laid as early as 1969.

of the 'here and now', the montage of background noises and music in the film introduces a presence - the presence of the surrounding world - a fact, which now brushes the medium of film against the grain.

As the distortion of living language is thus effected by devices which have been developed in the theatre in interaction with television aesthetics, it is by means of media interplay that Fassbinder externalises the characters' alienated, artificial use of language. For as all the devices which have been identified as transposed from other media, i.e. the exaggeration of the dialect's idiosyncrasies, the breaking-up of the flow of language into rather isolated speech acts and the juxtaposition of presumably authentic character speech with assembled music and turned-up noises, convey the impression of a loss of roots, personal inauthenticity and lethargy, they all contribute to the externalisation to the characters' state of mind, that is their social alienation. Consequently, Karl-Heinz Assenmacher's argument that the tendency towards self-referentiality in *Katzelmacher*'s employment of language signifies social alienation can be supported.[46] Since the devices used for this exteriorisation have been identified as formal and functional modifications of television's representational conventions, which have emerged from the director's own theatre practice, the film's use of language contributes towards the structural correspondence between the film's formal and thematic sides. Just as the characters' use of language is conditioned by the repressive conditions under which they live, the aesthetic rendering of this state of affairs is permeated by artistic devices which originate from media other than film.

### III.2.5 The Weal and Woe of an *antiteater* Film Production: The Film's Visual Language

The visual language which Fassbinder develops in *Katzelmacher* is largely determined by the economic conditions under which the film was produced.

[46] Assenmacher, 'Das engagierte Theater des Rainer Werner Fassbinder', 1-86 (p. 7).

Although none of his early film productions can be called a big budget production, *Katzelmacher* is certainly an extreme case insofar as its budget of about DM 80.000 makes it the cheapest full-length feature film he ever produced. Naturally, a budget of this size, which barely pays for the film material and the developing costs, imposes considerable material restrictions on the film's production. Fassbinder could not afford to pay for the use of any up-to-date equipment or travel expenses, let alone star actors or expensive mise-en-scene. Hence the director relied on those resources which were available to him from the *antiteater* and went, as far as the film equipment was concerned, for the cheapest options. These, however, imposed considerable aesthetic restrictions on the production. While the use of a heavy and rather immobile camera, which dated from the early years of sound film, imposed an aesthetics of stasis upon the film, the only option to keep the costs for the film material and its developing low, was to use monochrome film material. Thus, the poor financial endowment of the film production curtailed the film's expressive possibilities considerably.

In order to cope with the aesthetic restrictions imposed by the outdated equipment, Fassbinder develops a strategy which allows him to turn the equipment's aesthetic limits to his own advantage. Rather than attempting to stretch the material resources to their limits and thus run the risk of exposing their insufficiency, the director turns the tables on his difficult financial situation and actually expands on the aesthetic restrictions imposed by the outdated equipment and the shortage of money. Drawing on the artistic experience he had had at the *antiteater*, Fassbinder deliberately neglects many of the medium's aesthetic possibilities, makes a virtue of visual austerity and turns it into a style.[47] As this kind of exaggeration of aesthetic understatement makes the film not only freely admit but even exhibit the poverty of its production conditions, its visual language does not betray any aesthetic insufficiencies. Taking advantage of his theatre background, Fassbinder has his own

[47] As will shortly be shown in more detail, this strategy applies first and foremost to Fassbinder's way of handling the camera. For as Dietrich Lohmann, the camera man who shot the film, has pointed out, the lack of camera movement in the film is not only due to the relative immobility of the old camera, but also to Fassbinder's endeavour to develop an artistic style on the basis of this insufficiency. - Dietrich Lohmann in the documentary *Ich will nicht nur, daß ihr mich liebt* (1992) dir. Hans-Günther Pflaum.

aesthetic standards of minimalism exceed those imposed by the production and thus remedies in an aesthetic way what the production lacks on the financial side.

The minimalist style which emerges from Fassbinder's handling of the equipment's technical and aesthetic restrictions is a style of monstrous monotony. Although scarcely more than recording what happens in the backyard, Fassbinder develops a heavy-going style which deliberately upsets all ratios characteristic of conventional, realistic storytelling, if realism be understood in the terms and narrative codes of the classical Hollywood cinema. The film's visual language always appears to be too slow, too monotonous, too predictable. Although Fassbinder thus develops a visual style which makes the apathy of the characters experienceable for the spectator, the deliberate denial to guide the spectator's attention thwarts any empathy on the part of the spectator and instead creates a considerable distance between spectator and screen. Thus the spectator is put into a position in which he can understand the characters' lack of orientation while observing them with great scrutiny. It is by means of such an extraordinary condensation that Fassbinder develops a visual language which is apt to unravel the socio-psychological mechanisms behind everyday violence.

It is striking to see that the monotonous style, which results from Fassbinder's minimalist exaggeration of the equipment's technical limits, moves the film into the aesthetic proximity of television and theatre. Three devices can be identified which contribute to this impression. Firstly, the immobility of the camera is exaggerated to such an extent that each of the film's shots are characterised by a static frame. Secondly, the poverty of the mise-en-scene is amplified by the application of a kind of frontality of the image which hardly facilitates any depth of field; and finally, Fassbinder's implementation of monochrome film material is heightened by a visual monotony which paints the images in no more than the various tones of monotonous grey. As these artistic means can - with the exception of the black-and-white quality of the image, which only invites the parallel with then black-and-white television - be related to representational conventions of both theatre and television (its presented programmes in particular, e.g. the news), it becomes apparent that the monotonous visual style of *Katzelmacher*, too, is based on media interplay to a large extent.

The means used by Fassbinder to expand on the old camera's relative immobility, the implementation of apparently static frames, makes any kind of camera movement very rare in the film. There is no reframing, no tilting or panning and certainly no zoom or close-up to be found in the film. However, although Fassbinder thus largely goes along with the demands imposed upon the film by the outdated equipment, camera movement is not entirely absent from the film. There is one tracking shot which is repeated several times in the film, namely whenever the camera retreats in front of the walking characters in the 'walks across the courtyard'. While this tracking shot proves that the general lack of camera movement in the film is not only encouraged by the outdated equipment, but deliberately used as an artistic device, the amount of movement which it purports is nonetheless negligible. For as the camera appears to 'pull' the characters across the courtyard, the size of their images remains constant just as if there was no movement at all. Consequently, the consistent observation of constancy of size within each individual sequence of the film is an artistic device which may have been inspired, but certainly not caused by the relative immobility of the camera.

Since constancy of size is known from theatre's and television's forms of representation, its extensive use puts the film's visual language in the aesthetic proximity of theatre and television. However, whilst constancy of size does not carry any particular signals in the media of theatre or television - constancy of size in the theatre represents an essential condition of representation itself, while on television it predominates for practical reasons whenever a certain text is presented to the viewer directly - in film it precludes so many of the medium's expressive possibilities that its employment gains a special meaning. For as it excludes the use of the close-up for example, a device of which it is well known that Belá Balázs regards it as the prime filmic means to convey the expressions of the soul,[48] and of which Hugo Münsterberg says that it is the main means to signify the mental state of attention,[49] constancy of size signals the absence of both, of soul as well as alertness. Thus, the transposition of what is a mere convention in theatre and television into the medium

[48] Belá Balázs, *Theory of the Film* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1952)
[49] Hugo Münsterberg, 'The Means of the Photoplay', in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Gerald Mast et al. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 355-361 (p. 356).

of film converts it into an aesthetic device which can be used to convey a meaning which it would hardly be able to convey in the theatre and only under certain conditions in television.

Another strategy devised in order to make a virtue of necessity and expand on the restrictions imposed by the shortage of money, is the reduction in depth of field which gives the film's images the impression of flat frontality. In contrast to the play, which is set in the open space of a Bavarian village, the setting which was selected for the film is that of a Munich backyard. While this change may well have been decided upon in order to keep travelling costs low, the enclosed space diminishes the possibilities of depth of field considerably. Therefore the director turns around and selects his camera positions in a way that the camera's lens finds itself in a position parallel to the background plane. Thus, the images are given the character of flat frontality, an impression which is particularly strong in the 'group pictures' as they are shot against the backyard's wall. However, as the same flatness applies, for example, to the 92nd sequence which shows Marie and Jorgos sitting on a park bench in the countryside, it becomes clear that the frontality of the images does not depend on any particular location. Although the shortage of money may have inspired the general lack of depth of field in the film it is really caused by the frontality of the chosen camera positions.

As such frontality is just as characteristic of the theatre as it is of certain television programmes, Fassbinder's visual style again makes use of media interplay. For whilst in the theatre frontality, just like the constancy of size, is part of the mediums' representational conditions, the frontal view provided by television cameras is again a question of practicality whenever a subject is presented to the audience directly. However, whilst in these two media frontality is thus part of their representational conventions, in film, a medium whose expressive possibilities rely much more on the use of different camera angles and depth of field, it conveys a special meaning: the impression of confinement and lack of transcendence. For whereas camera angles and deep focus provide a realistic perspective which the spectator is free to assume, flat frontality rather self-referentially emphasises the cinema screen's two-dimensional flatness and thus denies any such perspective and,

by extension, transcendence and freedom.[50] Thus, a device which belongs to the standard repertoire of theatre and television takes on the effect of a mental iron curtain when it is transposed into the medium of film.

Besides the constancy of size and the flat frontality of the images it is also the images' monotonous greyness which reflects Fassbinder's endeavour to make the financial conditions of his production aesthetically productive. Obviously, this greyness is mainly due to the fact that Fassbinder, for economical reasons, chose to use monochrome film material, which is considerably less expensive than colour film. However, the material used does not entirely explain the monotony of the film's greyness. For even black-and-white film offers a great variety of visual means such as the variation of brightness and the use of dramatising contrasts. However, unlike Fassbinder's last black-and-white film *The Longing of Veronika Voss* (Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss, 1981) the early film does not make use of either of these means. Regardless of whether the film's scenes are set indoors or outdoors, they all appear to apply daylight lighting to the effect that the different shades of monotonous grey prevail. Thus, although the use of monochrome film material already precludes a series of aesthetic possibilities which colour film allows, the monotony of the film's greyness shows that the director deliberately expands on the material's aesthetic limits.

It is interesting to note that this aesthetic approach to the medium of film was put forward at a time when the introduction of then black-and-with television was more or less accomplished and almost every household was able to receive its programmes. As the black-and-white image was thus rehabilitated in the face of previous decades of colour film production, the second thoughts which the use of monochrome material may have caused otherwise may have been pushed aside easily. However, whilst the television of the late 1960s had no other option but to broadcast in monotonous grey - also television is rather reluctant to use the extremes

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[50] According to Noël Carroll, the insight that the transcendence of the diegesis in the cinema depends upon an individual perspective was first formulated by André Bazin. Therefore it is not surprising that Bazin's idea of cinema realism mainly rests on the idea of spatial realism, which is to be secured by means of deep focus and long takes, i.e. means which give the camera to possibility to explore any particular setting. - Noël Carroll, *Philosophical Problems of Classical Film Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 100-107.

of the black-and-white scale - in the medium of film, where colour was available, the greyness of the images signals not only monotony, but also bleakness and grimness. Thus, the use of monochrome material, which may have been encouraged by the existence of television, has an effect in the world of the cinema which makes it the carrier of a piece of information which it would not have become on contemporary television.

Consequently, just like the film's structure, its acting style and use of language, its visual language, too, is marked by extensive media interplay. The film's use of constancy of size within the boundaries of each sequence as well as its use of frontal camera positions have been pointed out as akin to theatre's representational conditions as well as certain forms of televisual representation, i.e. mainly aesthetic forms which involve some form of direct presentation to the viewer. Moreover, the fact that the film is shot in black and white is line with television's broadcasting practice at the time so that television may well have encouraged the use of monochrome material. However, as all these theatrical and televisual means find entry into Fassbinder's early film, the different context of media conventions has them undergo a functional change. All the transposed means contribute to the impression of monotony, confinement, bleakness, and apathy and thus represent the main means for the conveyance for the state of mind which the characters' submission to the conditions of the courtyard brings about: social alienation. As the various means of media interplay thus purport the characters' internalisation of their social conditions, the visual language of *Katzelmacher* contributes to the aesthetic realisation of the director's overall aesthetic principle in so far as a structure of the one within the other on the formal level is used to convey a similar structure on the level of content.

In conclusion, all that remains to be said is that the adaptation of *Katzelmacher* combines the adjustment of the play to the requirements of filmic representation with a degree of faithfulness to the original's scope that it allows Fassbinder to carry the folk play's message of 'was sich draußen tatsächlich abspielt oder abspielen könnte'[51] into the medium of cinema. Like the play, the film succeeds

[51] Greif, *Zum modernen Drama*, p. 64.

in showing Jorgos's catalytic effect on his social environment while demonstrating at the same time that this effect does not bring about any substantial change. However, although both the play and the film make extensive use of media interplay, the artistic devices and strategies employed to bring this message across are quite different in the two media. While this supports Fassbinder's own statement about the aesthetic reciprocity between film and theatre in his early work, the fact that the transposition of aesthetic means from one medium to the other also includes the medium of television points well beyond it. Such threefold media interplay makes Fassbinder's film carry a heavy theatrical load and thereby cuts the wings off a medium which is normally associated with weightlessness, magic, and the fantastic.[52] However, as the film presents characters who by far do not live up to their possibilities, this stylistic inertia is not a deficiency of the film, but, very much along the lines of Horváth's idea of 'the people seen through the eyes of the people', represents the adequate form for the depiction of their dilemma. Carrying artistic devices from one medium into another, Fassbinder manages to put the audience in a situation which is analogous to that of the characters so that it is made difficult for them to push the characters' dilemma as far-fetched aside. Thus, it is ultimately Fassbinder's aesthetics of media interplay which supports Karl-Heinz Assenmacher's observation that Horváths artistic credo has survived in the new German folk play's of the 1960s and 70s.[53]

[52] Parker Tyler, 'Preface', in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Gerald Mast et al. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 725-729.

[53] Assenmacher, 'Das engagierte Theater des Rainer Werner Fassbinder', 1-86 (p. 4).

## III.3

## *Angst essen Seele auf* - The 'Staging' of the Melodramatic Condition

### III.3.1 Between *antiteater* and Television Experience. Fassbinder's Appropriation of the Melodramatic Tradition of the Classical Hollywood Cinema

When Fassbinder was voted 'Director of the Year' by the widely read 'International Film Guide' in 1976 and hailed 'the most original film director since Godard' by the New York Times's influential film critic Vincent Canby in 1977, this was thanks to an artistic development during which Fassbinder gradually moved away from the aesthetics of stylised minimalism and towards the emotionally more excessive form of melodrama. In fact, these positive assessments of Fassbinder's work are not based on Fassbinder's early films such as *Love Is Colder Than Death* or *Katzelmacher*, but on the films which were made from 1971 onwards: *The Merchant of Four Seasons* (Der Händler der vier Jahreszeiten, 1971), *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant, 1972), *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (*Angst Essen Seele auf*, 1973) und *Mother Küster's Trip to Heaven* (Mutter Küsters' Fahrt zum Himmel, 1975). In these films, the early films' almost universal coldness, which appears to deny the protagonists' personal feelings any social relevance, is replaced by a strong human interest in the characters. However shy and self-defeatist, the characters now begin to strive for self-expression. Fassbinder embarked upon the quest for the 'reality of feelings'.

That these films were first to be successful in the United States does not seem

to be accidental. For their production was preceded by Fassbinder's reception of the Hollywood melodrama of the 1950s. In his search for an adequate form, Fassbinder came across the melodramas by the German-born, American film director Douglas Sirk when a Munich cinema organised a retrospective of his films in the autumn of 1970. It was predominantly the acquaintance with these films, which inspired Fassbinder to pronounce his wish to create the German Hollywood film. In fact, Fassbinder's film *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* has often been referred to as a free variation of Sirk's 1955 film *All That Heaven Allows*.[54] Apparently, the director decided that the melodramatic genre would not only provide an appropriate form to convey the 'reality of feelings' which he set out to investigate, but would also enable his films to appeal to a larger audience. Consequently, the melodramatic polarisation between the films' protagonists and their social environment became one of the hallmarks of the Fassbinder film by the end of the first third of the 1970s.

Fassbinder's decision to take up on the melodramatic form does not seem accidental insofar as melodrama caters for dramatic tastes which can be presumed of a director with a theatre background. Eric Bentley has argued that melodrama represents the 'quintessence of drama' as the *impulse* to write drama is extremely easy to identify in this genre. Bentley writes that 'the impulse to write drama is, in the first instance, the impulse to write melodrama'.[55] All the emotional impulses directed towards heightening, dramatisation, acting out and authentic personal expression find their clearest and most powerful representation in the genre of melodrama. The genre's predilection for uninhibited displays of often oversimplified and exaggerated emotions places theatricality at the heart of its aesthetics. Given this intimate relationship with theatricality, it seems to be of some significance that also Sirk started his artistic career in the theatre. When Paul Willemen writes about Sirk that 'he drew on his theatrical experience not to break the rules of [the] genres, but to intensify them'[56] then this is - to some extent and with a more critical thrust - also true of Fassbinder.

Against this background of the two directors' common root, two aspects of

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[54] Cf. e.g. Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 45-48.
[55] Eric Bentley, *The Life of the Drama* (New York: Atheneum, 1964), p. 216.
[56] Quotation in: Pipolo, 'Bewitched by the Holy Whore', 83-112 (p. 88).

the Hollywood director's film aesthetics can be identified which seem to have had a great impact on the German filmmaker's further artistic development. Firstly, Fassbinder detects a certain proximity to life in Sirk's films. By learning about Sirk, Fassbinder discovered a director who had turned his back on the humanistic education of his childhood, abandoned philosophy and discontinued his career in the German theatre of the 1920s. Thus denouncing a notion of art which is merely an illustration of preconceived ideas, Sirk became directly interested in people so that his films seem to provide direct access to an unfeigned reality:

> Sirk hat gesagt, man kann nicht Filme über etwas machen, man kann nur Filme mit etwas machen, mit Menschen, mit Licht, mit Blumen, mit Spiegeln, mit Blut, eben mit all diesen wahnsinnigen Sachen, für die es sich lohnt. Sirk hat außerdem gesagt, das Licht und die Einstellung, das ist die Philosophie des Regisseurs. Und Douglas Sirk hat die zärtlichsten gemacht, die ich kenne, Filme von einem, der die Menschen liebt und sie nicht verachtet wie wir.[57]

Fassbinder perceives in Sirk's approach to filmmaking a refusal to objectify the different aesthetic elements as means to an end and instead stresses a perspective which invests emotional energy in the things and human beings to be framed in order to bring them to life. This approach to film aesthetics prompts Fassbinder to reconsider his earlier artistic approach, an approach which up to this point was largely influenced by the denouncing perspective put forward in the new German folk plays by Marieluise Fleißer and Ödön von Horváth. Thus, while he continues to be directly interested in people, Fassbinder now aims to promote a perspective of love as opposed to that of contempt.

However, as the quotation from the interview with Fassbinder shows, Sirk's influence not only changes the filmmaker's view of people, but also has a considerable impact on the further development of his visual language. Fassbinder is intrigued by the wealth of Sirk's visual devices and the way in which they are made use of in order to heighten the films' emotional effects. Evidently, this sparks off Fassbinder's new approach in which the various visual elements of the mise-en-scene are to be used according to the signifying power of their emotional immediacy. This

[57] Fassbinder, *Filme befreien den Kopf*, p. 11.

method not only gives Fassbinder the possibility indirectly to allude to the characters' states of mind in a more differentiated way and thus purport the reality of their feelings, but also to foreground his own emotional relationship to these characters. For this purpose, Fassbinder takes advantage of the various strategies offered by the cinematic apparatus and the mise-en-scene to a much larger extent than before. The camera has become more mobile, the pace of the editing is stepped up and the images are more elegant. Melodrama provides the aesthetic framework in which Fassbinder replaces the early films' stylised monotony with an emotionally more expressive language.

However, Fassbinder's enthusiasm about Sirk's approach to reality and visual representation should not make us blind to the fact that the German filmmaker's films are after all quite different from those made by the director of the classical Hollywood melodrama. Being decidedly more interested in the question of everyday social interaction than in creating what was considered at the time as 'weepies', Fassbinder, rather than the other way round, presents melodrama as the outcome of the theatricality of everyday life. Thus, drawing on his *antiteater* experiences, Fassbinder exploits the possibility of theatricality inherent in the melodramatic genre to a much larger extent than his predecessor does. Evidently, this is the point where Fassbinder remains decidedly more faithful to his own artistic roots than complies with the requirements of the genre. Nevertheless, since Fassbinder changes his perspective, he not only develops new devices, but also has them fulfil a different function. Thus, although theatricality still occupies a place within the films' narrative logic similar to the early films, it brings about a new aesthetic approach and a narrative strategy which must be called melodramatic.

As repeated references to Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* make Fassbinder's film *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* appear to take a central position within the framework of Fassbinder's appropriation of the melodramatic genre, this film has been selected for close investigation. However, the relationship between the two films is not as clear as it may seem at first. For although both films deal with the problems surrounding personal relationships which are not considered socially acceptable, the setting, the narrative logic and the mise-en-scene are entirely different in the two films.

Moreover, Fassbinder must have conceived of the film well before he came across Sirk's films in the autumn of 1970. For although there is a difference concerning the end of the story - Ali does not break down with a stomach ulcer, but is charged with the murder of his wife Emmi after six months of marriage - a rough outline of the film's story-line is told by a chambermaid in the film *The American Soldier*, a film which Fassbinder shot two months earlier, in August 1970. Consequently, even the film's idea appears to have been developed without the knowledge of Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows*. However, the fact remains that when Fassbinder eventually made *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* in 1973 this was done under the impression of Sirk's films.[58]

While the relationship between Sirk's film and Fassbinder's 'remake' thus appears in a light which tends to make it more uncertain and vague than is usually admitted, another aesthetic influence, to which the production of *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* was also exposed, moves towards the centre of attention: the influence of television. For the production of *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* was preceded by the production of Fassbinder's first television series *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* in 1972, an event which, as the director himself explained, was to have some impact on the aesthetics of his cinema films. For as the filmmaker subsequently envisaged a more 'positive' approach to the representation of social life in his cinema films,[59] the difference between the story told in *The American Soldier* and the film story of *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, appears to be due to his television production experience. Consequently, the appropriation of the melodramatic genre should not only be considered against the background of the filmmaker's fascination with the films of Douglas Sirk and his *antiteater* experience, but also in the light of possible aesthetic repercussions caused by his television production experience.

[58] Cf. Roth, 'Kommentierte Filmographie', pp. 119-269 (p. 166).
[59] See section I.2.2 for the relevant statement by Fassbinder.

III.3.2 The Inversion of the Melodramatic Structure in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* by Means of Television's Structural Devices

As has previously been indicated, both Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* and Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* are about loving relationships which are not considered acceptable within the respective social environments because of the inequality of the characters involved. Whereas Sirk's 1955 film tells the story of a middle-class, small town American woman (Jane Wyman) whose love for her gardener (Rock Hudson) meets the resistance of her children, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* narrates the events surrounding the relationship between the ageing cleaning woman Emmi Kurowski (Brigitte Mira) and the young Moroccan guest worker Ali (El Hedi ben Salem M'Barek Mohammed Mustaffa). In entering into a rather unlikely relationship and marriage, the two protagonists seek to assert themselves against prejudices connected to age, race, gender, and class.[60] As Fassbinder thus draws attention to those areas of social life where the acceptability of certain human relationships is still at issue today, he, very much walking in the footsteps of his admired precursor, lends new topicality to a theme which is usually associated with 18th century melodrama, the topic of the *mésalliance*.

However, while both films share the same interest in loving relationships which are socially not considered acceptable, the approach to this topic is quite different in each case. For whilst Sirk's film largely follows the emancipatory logic of the melodramatic genre because his heroine only gradually manages to overcome her passivity before she eventually commits herself to her lover, Fassbinder's 'direct interest' in people works against the traditional melodramatic structure. For people are often much more inclined to enter into a relationship helter-skelter than to postpone their feelings. As Emmi seeks to leave her previous experience of loneliness behind and realise her wish for happiness in a relationship, she takes action without hesitation and enters into an unconventional relationship with Ali at the beginning of the film. Thus, instead of thriving on the 'delicious deferment' of feelings which must not be admitted, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* reflects the idea put

[60] Denise Hartsough, 'Cine-Feminism Renegotiated: Fassbinder's *Ali* as Interventionist Cinema', *Wide Angle*, 12, 1 (1990), 18-29 (p. 26).

forward by the *Living Theater*'s production of *Paradise Now*, namely that it would be possible to rid oneself of one's previous self in an instant and jump into a new reality of freedom and happiness. Consequently, Emmi's ability to take the initiative makes *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* represent an attempt to *avoid* melodrama.

As Fassbinder's 'direct interest' in people thus undermines the idea of melodrama, Emmi's ability to take the initiative still facilitates the exploration of the circumstances which surround a presumably unacceptable relationship. For as soon as it becomes known that Emmi lives with a foreign guest-worker, she is not only engulfed by a sea of xenophobia, but has also to realise that she is not able to cope with the situation she created. As the threat to Emmi's marriage and Ali's subsequent contraction of a stomach ulcer is therefore not only due to the xenophobic prejudices of the Munich petty-bourgeois milieu, but also to the high degree of innocent disregard for these prejudices on the part of the couple, it is here, at this point, that melodrama is reintroduced into the film. For Peter Brooks has defined the melodramatic utterance as an utterance which 'breaks through everything that constitutes the "reality principle", all its censorships, accommodations, tomings-down'.[61] As *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* does thus not avoid melodrama altogether, but merely inverts its pattern, [62] the film is very much in line with what Katherine Woodward has termed an 'anti-melodrama' insofar as it 'make[s] viewers explicitly aware of the melodramatic perspective'.[63]

On the level of the film's structure, the inversion of the melodramatic perspective is rendered by the use of a narrative strategy which is characteristic of television soap operas. For just like Fassbinder's last play, *Garbage, the City and Death*, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* consists of two parts whose complementary dramatic movements are linked by a radical break. In the first part the optimism and hope for personal happiness in the relationship are dashed by the complication which arises from the couple's objectification within their social environment, while in the second

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[61] Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination* (New Haven , London: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 41.
[62] Cf. Howard Feinstein, 'Spectacle', *Cinema Journal*, 1 (1983), 44-56 (p. 53); also: Katherine S. Woodward, 'European Anti-Melodrama: Godard, Truffaut, Fassbinder', *Post-Script*, 2 (1984), 34-47 (p. 36).
[63] Woodward, 'European Anti-Melodrama', 34-47 (p. 34).

part the economic and social weakness of Emmi's social environment makes her so strong that her marriage threatens to crumble. As these complementary movements finish with an ending, which denies resolution - Ali's ulcer may be curable, but is likely to return - an endless continuation without development or improvement is suggested. As television dramaturgy is equally marked by alternating ups and downs which facilitate endless continuation while the individual segments are, as John Ellis has noted, subdivided by 'sharp breaks',[64] the nearness of the film's narrative structure to that of television series seems evident. Hence *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* appears to consist of two segments of a television series blown up into a film.

The willingness to enter into a mutual relationship is on both sides, Emmi's as well as Ali's, founded on the negation of its negation. While their acquaintance is due to a chance encounter in a Munich guest-worker's bar, which Emmi enters as she tries to escape the rain, the fact that Ali approaches her and invites her to dance with him is the result of no more than a bit of teasing. After a brief conversation Ali accompanies Emmi to her home where the elderly woman remembers how previous moments of hesitation and inhibition prevented her from realising herself and consequently invites the foreigner up for a coffee. As Ali describes the living conditions of a foreign guest-worker to her, the decision that he move in with her is quickly taken. Thus, on both sides the readiness to enter into a close relationship is perhaps best described as a 'no' to the 'no' rather than a proper 'yes'. That the desire to realise happiness in a relationship is a *re*action to given circumstances becomes obvious when her landlord's son (Marquard Bohm) reminds her that she is not allowed to sublet any of her rooms: her decision to marry Ali is a response to the threat of losing him. Again, Emmi's ability to take the initiative is very much due to a given circumstance and previous experience of loneliness.

While Emmi and Ali thus pursue their personal happiness, their social environment, guided by strong xenophobic sentiments, increasingly refuse to interact with the couple. Emmi's neighbour's, her colleagues, the local grocer and her grown-up children are all equally involved in the process, which is aimed at Emmi's social isolation. Whilst Emmi's neighbours (Liselotte Eder, Elma Karlowa, Anita Bucher)

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[64] Ellis, *Visible Fictions*, p. 150.

prefer to observe, tease and bully her from a distance and report to the landlord about Ali's stay in the house, the local grocer (Walter Sedlmeyer) refuses to attend to Ali because his German is found not good enough. This kind of harassment continues in Emmi's work place when her colleagues (Gusti Kreissl, Elisabeth Bertram, Margit Symo) begin to shun her. Besides, her grown-up children leave in protest when they are introduced to Ali and even kick in the television set.[65] When Emmi decides to turn the tables, ignore the social expulsion and mix with Ali's friends instead, the neighbours break up her party by calling in the police. Finally, as Emmi is on the verge of a nervous breakdown, the couple decides to go on holiday together. Consequently, by taking the hasty decision to live with and marry Ali, Emmi supplies all the means to those who try to force her back into the role of the victim.

Emmi's breakdown marks the climactic turning point of the film; as the couple returns from their holiday their social situation is turned upside down. Due to economic pressure from the outside, Emmi and Ali are suddenly faced with an unexpected willingness for reconciliation. One of her neighbours hopes to use some of Emmi's storage space in the basement of the tenement house, the grocer has come to realise that he has to fight for every customer as the new supermarket in the area is hard to compete with, her son Albert asks her to baby-sit his child for him and her colleagues have found another scapegoat. As one of the cleaning women turned out to be a thief, it is now her replacement, Yolanda (Helga Ballhaus), a guest worker from Yugoslavia, who takes Emmi's place and is excluded from the group. Thus reconciliation is not due to her social environment's ability to overcome their xenophobic prejudices or the insight in the force of Emmi's feelings and the necessity of their realisation. In each case it is outside economic pressure which motivates the abandonment of the initial attitude of objectifying hostility and its replacement with an invitation to participation and integration. As Emmi thus grows strong, the scene is set for the drama of her marriage to begin.

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[65] This scene certainly reflects Sirk's *All that Heaven Allows* in which the upper middle class character Carey Scott is presented with a TV-set by her children. Television is thus to serve as a substitute for the inopportune relationship to the earthy gardener she is in love with. In Emmi's case, however, the possession of a TV-set could not prevent her from taking action and marrying Ali. Apparently, as television has not proved to be effective, it is kicked in. Here, too, Fassbinder clearly inverts the melodramatic pattern provided by Sirk's film.

Emmi's re-acceptance in her social environment has disastrous consequences for her marriage. For now Emmi is not only overly ready to please the people around herself and accept the values of her environment, but in being so she now betrays signs of the fact that she herself carries these values inside herself. Emmi begins to order Ali around, requires him to adjust to German customs and finally offers him to the voyeuristic looks of her colleagues. Thus passing on internalised social pressure, Emmi assumes a distance from Ali and subjects him to exactly that objectifying treatment which she found unbearable before. In the consequence of these developments Ali's character, too, is no longer stable. He returns to the bar maid (Barbara Valentin) with whom he seems to have had a relationship before and begins to show self-defeatist behaviour. However, Ali, too, is not only a victim: when Emmi goes to see him in his workplace to ask him to come back, Ali joins in the laughter when his colleagues (Rudolf Waldemar Brem, Kurt Raab) make fun of her. The film ends on an ambiguous note: at the point of their reconciliation Ali collapses with a perforated ulcer, which can be cured, whose return, however, is likely. As the stomach ulcer thus arrests the couple in limbo, it indicates the remaining antagonism between the different attitudes put forward in the film and the lost dream of easy emancipation and happiness whose symptom this ulcer is.

As the dramatic movements of the characters thus create two pairs of alternating ups and downs, the film's structure is well-chosen for the externalisation of the main characters' internalisation of the social other. While in the first part the up- and downward movement of Emmi's dramatic curve indicates the initial enthusiasm and subsequent disillusionment about the possibility of realising her wish for happiness, the down- and upward movement of her social environment contrasts it by conveying the initial frustration and subsequent recreation among her neighbours, children and colleagues. Similarly, in the second part of the film the up- and downward movement of Emmi's curve shows her relaxation in the face of her neighbour's etc. willingness for reconciliation before her marriage threatens to break apart, the down- and upward movement of Ali's curve conveys the devastation about his objectification and his subsequent recreation when the couple reunite. As this deviation from melodrama's 'normal' course has been pointed out as akin to

television plotting, the externalisation of the characters' re-active underdog mentality is due to media interplay. This puts the dramaturgical structure of *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* in line with Fassbinder's overall aesthetic principle, the correspondence between two structures of internalisation on the levels of content and form: the transposition of elements taken from television aesthetics into the cinema brings out Emmi's and Ali's internalisation of social patterns of behaviour.

### III.3.3 Typification and Everyday Interaction. The Further Development of the *aniteater*'s Acting Style within the Melodramatic Framework

In its understatement, the acting style in Fassbinder's 1973 film is grossly exaggerated. Like in the wood-cut technique, the individual features of the characters recede behind those traits which indicate their place on either side of the melodramatic conflict. Whilst Emmi and Ali clearly form a couple of innocent lovers and thereby represent the characters with whom the spectator's sympathy is to rest, the other characters follow the patterns of negative stereotypes: the gossiping neighbours, the stubborn children, the greedy merchant and the mobbing colleagues. As Fassbinder's exaggerated acting style is thus geared at the creation of social types, it is quite within the aesthetic limits of the melodramatic genre. For as Peter Brooks has pointed out in his book *The Melodramatic Imagination*, melodrama lives off the clashes between personified attitudes:

> [I]t is delusive to seek an interior conflict, the 'psychology of melodrama', because melodrama exteriorizes conflict and psychic structure, producing instead what we might call the 'melodrama of psychology'. What we have is a drama of pure psychic signs - called Father, Daughter, Protector, Persecutor, Judge, Duty, Obedience, Justice - that interest us through their clash...[66]

Evidently, the social types to be found in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* fit in quite nicely with the melodramatic types enlisted here by Brooks.

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[66] Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*, p. 35.

However, while the typification of the characters helps bring about the film's melodramatic perspective, Fassbinder's 'direct interest' in people and their everyday ways of social interaction questions the melodramatic standpoint. For while the melodrama of the Sirkian kind largely goes along with Robert Heilman's observation that, 'if a dramatist puts victims on the stage, he rarely examines their characters',[67] Fassbinder does examine their characters. This is not primarily done by giving them the possibility to explain themselves, but by means of the inversion of the initial situation in the second part of the film, which makes their typification show fissures and breaks. While its economic weakness forces the Munich petty-bourgeois milieu to back down on their xenophobic stance against Emmi's marriage, Emmi is no longer the innocent lover and victim when she begins to objectify Ali. The continuity of the characters' melodramatic typification being thereby subverted, the 'monopathy' which Heilman has characterised as typical of melodrama no longer applies.[68] Thus, Fassbinder's emphasis on the depiction of social experience makes it clear that empirical life is more complex than the melodramatic imagination would have us believe.

As Fassbinder's direct interest in people tends to dissolve the wholeness of the melodramatic types, the empirical approach does not do away with social character types altogether. For although the initial image which the main characters give of themselves is called into question, the changes in their behaviour are of the kind which can be expected of characters of their type. As these changes do therefore not contradict the probability of their respective character types, they merely show to what extent their behaviour depends on a given situation. Indeed, Fassbinder's own explanation of the main characters' changed behaviour contains a clear reference to a certain character type, namely that of the outsider:

> Bei Minderheiten, Außenseitern etc. ist das tatsächlich so, daß sie, solange sie den Druck von außen spüren, nicht zu ihren eigentlichen Problemen kommen, weil sie vollauf damit beschäftigt sind, sich nach außen abzuschirmen und sich so 'ner Solidarität zu versichern.[69]

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[67] Robert Bechtold Heilman, *Tragedy and Melodrama: Versions of Experience* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1968), p. 80.
[68] Ibid., p. 84.
[69] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 49.

Fassbinder appeals to his own experience of life in order to explain the breaks in the main characters' personalities as part of their respective types. As the characters thus simultaneously step out and stay within melodrama's convention of character representation, the filmmaker's empirical approach maintains the melodramatic polarisation between them.

Artistically, this approach to character representation is rendered by means of that acting style which Fassbinder developed with the *antiteater* troupe. It clearly betrays the choreographic qualities which have already been considered in the context of *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* and *Katzelmacher*. Thus, while the fact that the acting takes place in otherwise more or less empty settings makes sure that it can unfold its choreographic qualities in the first place, the speed of the acting, although perceptibly faster than in the early films, is still decidedly slower than in any mainstream Hollywood film. This being the case, the acting style is still decidedly less mechanical than it was the case previously because the newly developed melodramatic perspective makes the characters interact emotionally. Thus, another device comes to the fore: the gaze, or more generally, the way the characters look at and perceive one another. As all these devices not only contribute towards the evocation of melodramatic polarisation between the opponents, but even heighten it to the degree that it approximates the traditional theatrical device of the play within the play, the peculiarities of the film's acting style are very much due to media interplay.

Taking the logic of attraction and repulsion quite literally, Fassbinder usually brings about melodramatic polarisation by spatially separating the characters, either by positioning the characters at the opposite ends of a room or a certain setting or by introducing spatial partitions or a special kind of lighting into the scene. Already the first sequence of the film is symptomatic for the way in which *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* uses the physical distance between the characters in order to bring out the melodramatic polarisation between them. Emmi enters a local bar, where she is apparently not known, and sits down by the entrance door, far away from the other guests (Ali and his friends) who cluster around the far end of the bar. *Mutatis mutandis* this also goes for all those scenes which are set in the stairwell of Emmi's

tenement house. For as the characters are here more likely to interact verbally, physical distance is replaced by the use of different kinds of screens which either separate the characters from one another or obstruct the spectator's view of the events. As all these devices assign the characters to different spheres, realities of different orders, their spatial separation creates a stuffy atmosphere of curiosity and latent hostility.

As each setting is thus cleared of all external influences in order to measure the mental distance between the characters, regardless of whether the setting is indoors or outdoors, space is used in a highly metaphorical way. As such metaphorical use of space is usually associated with the theatrical mode of representation, James Franklin summarises the use of space in this way:

> The film's exterior scenes, for example, were shot on location in Munich; however, automobiles and passersby seldom intrude upon the action or the relationships of the characters. The viewer constantly sees Emmi and Ali; co-workers, family, neighbors, and the rest of society are seen only as they relate to Emmi and Ali. The world is a stage cleared for the acting-out of their relationship.[70]

As the acting style thus turns the settings into stage-like spaces in order to give proper representation to the characters' emotions, the melodramatic polarisation in the film is by and large the outcome of Fassbinder's implementation of a choreographic device which can already be found in his early plays and films such as *Katzelmacher* and *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*.

The spatial separation of the characters not only characterises the characters present as opponents, but also gives free reign to looks and gazes as the dominant mode of communication in the film.[71] In fact, the grouping of the characters in two different camps in the film's first sequence already gives rise to an exchange of silent gazes which force the spectator to look closely and discover from the acting and the mise-en-scene what is not verbally pronounced. Similarly, in the film's climactic scene, in which Emmi confesses to Ali that she can no longer bear the social

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[70] James C. Franklin, 'Method and Message: Forms of Communication in Fassbinder's *Angst Essen Seele Auf*, *Literature / Film Quarterly*, 3 (1979), 182-199 (p. 190).

[71] A psychoanalytical approach to the subject of the gaze in Fassbinder's films has been presented by Kaja Silverman, 'Fassbinder and Lacan: A Reconstruction of Gaze, Look and Image', *Camera Obscura*, 19 (1989) 54-85.

harassment, stares and gazes hover over the interaction like a curse. As Emmi breaks down in tears, the entire staff of the otherwise empty beer garden observes the couple from a distance; standing in a group like statutes in the background of the picture, they watch the couple with a terrifying lack of expression. As these stares and gazes turn the main characters into the objects of other people's attention, the emphasis on the power of the look indicates the nature of the melodramatic polarisation in the film. Emmi and Ali are objectified; as they seek to realise their wish for happiness in a relationship without taking society into consideration, society imposes itself upon the couple in the shape of silent gazes.

Again, this kind of attention appears almost literally to put the protagonists on a stage. For as the interplay of looks and gazes approximates the spatial arrangement in the theatre with the actors on the one side of the invisible divide and the spectators on the other, the acting, as Judith Mayne puts it, 'lays bare spectacle as a social form'.[72] Mayne explains the analogy between the interplay of looks and gazes in the film and the theatrical situation in her 1977 article *Fassbinder and Spectatorship*:

> [T]he process of the film focuses on the nature of the gaze, the objectifying look which transforms its field of vision into a stage, its object of vision into a spectacle.[73]

Thus, the separation of the characters within the setting, which is quite familiar from Fassbinder's early theatre performances and films, assumes a different function within the melodramatic framework. Although the device is still used to bring about an atmosphere of estrangement between the characters, this effect is not achieved by highlighting the lack of interaction between the characters, but by foregrounding the power of objectification which the gaze exercises.

Given the emphasis on the gaze, it almost goes without saying that the acting style in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* considerably slows down the movement of the film. Quite regularly, the way in which the characters stare at each other or into the distance is emphasised to such an extent that it downright arrest the movement of the

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[72] Judith Mayne, 'Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* and Spectatorship', in *Close Viewings: An Anthology of New Film Criticism*, ed. by Peter Lehmann (Tallahasee: The Florida State University Press, 1990), pp. 353-369, (p. 368).

[73] Judith Mayne, 'Fassbinder and Spectatorship', *New German Critique*, 12 (1977) , 61-74 (p. 73).

film for a number of seconds. However, it is not only the mutual and self-perception of the characters which slows the acting down. All the activities the characters engage in are drawn out in time. As the characters are usually shown pursuing their everyday business in the work place and at home, the representation of having breakfast together at home or at work, making a phone call, saying hello or good-bye or just walking from A to B always takes twice or even three times the amount of time we would normally expect. As the representation of rather mundane everyday activities thus betrays another characteristic of the *antiteater*'s acting style, it does not come as a surprise that the acting in Fassbinder's 1973 film, too, makes time solidify to such an extent that its use rather approximates the conventions of the theatre than those of the cinema. On the basis of such media interplay, the slow acting is emotionally charged and thus assigns meaning to the characters' activities.

As all the devices implemented to heighten the tension between the melodramatic opponents either emerged from Fassbinder's production experience in the theatre or bring about theatrical effects within the medium of film, it is not surprising that the rendition of the melodramatic polarisation between the characters stylises the acting to such an extent that Emmi's and Ali's relationship assumes the shape of a play staged for the members of their social environment. This becomes particularly obvious in those scenes in which the conflict threatens to escalate. When Emmi introduces her newly wedded husband to her adult children (Irm Hermann, Karl Scheydt, Peter Gauhe, R. W. Fassbinder) in the 20th sequence, the scene bears many similarities to the spatial set-up in the theatre. Emmi calls upon Ali to enter the room while her children are seated in her sitting-room like in a theatre. As Ali enters from the wings as it were, the line between the presentation and the audience in the room can easily be drawn. Thus, the combination of the spatial separation of the characters, the near real-time representation of their activities and the emphasis on the act of looking gives this sequence, like many others in the film, the impression that the couple's relationship approximates a device which features prominently in the development of modern Western theatre: that of a play within the play.[74]

[74] In turning towards the play-within-the-play device, Fassbinder not only draws on a long theatrical tradition, but also on a tradition which has made its way into television. Especially in game shows and all kinds of studio entertainment productions, television cameras frequently pan across the audience to show their reaction. The purpose of such pans seems obvious: they are supposed to convey the

Obviously, neither Emmi nor Ali put on a show in the way Hamlet does in Shakespeare's play. However, in the light of Nelson's investigation into the evolution of the play within a play, this dramatic device does not necessarily depend on a clear demarcation of an act of representation within a representation.[75] The oppositions proximity / distance and interaction / objectification are sufficient to identify this device in the film. By getting married, Emmi and Ali transcend the world of everyday life, but not on the basis of a mirror-like, well defined imitation as *Hamlet* has it, but as its radical other. The innocence involved in this step has a denouncing effect: Emmi and Ali unveil the petty-bourgeois notion of decency as hypocritical and bring out all the prejudices in their social environment. However, this rebounds on the couple as they are objectified by the members of their social environment to the effect that the front lines are redrawn in the second part of the film. Shakespeare may have used the play-within-the-play device to denounce the reality of the outer play; Fassbinder certainly uses it to question the *possibility* of the inner play. As the relationship between inner and outer 'play' is thus melodramatically charged, this accords with Woodward's definition of the anti-melodrama: it 'includes potentially melodramatic incidents and structures, which comment on the melodramatic possibilities'.[76]

However, the play-within-the-play device not only externalises the relationship between Emmi and Ali on the one hand and their neighbours, colleagues etc. on the other, but also indicates Fassbinder's approach to the medium of film and the positioning of the spectator within the film. For according to Nelson, in the theatre '[t]he play within a play is the theatre reflecting on itself, on its own

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familiar relationship between host and studio audience [which is] intended to mirror that proposed for the programme and audience at home' (Tony Wilson, *Watching Television: Hermeneutics, Reception and Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 20). It is such a camera movement which shows the relationship between inner and outer play in Fassbinder's film when, for instance, the camera reframes Emmi's neighbour after the couple leave the house in the morning. In using the play-within-the-play device in his feature film Fassbinder thus simultaneously draws on a theatrical and televisual form of representation.

[75] Referring to Arthur Schnitzler's play *The Green Cockatoo*, Nelson points out that the inner play may well lack 'scenario, ... formal stage direction, ... [and] spatial division between actors and spectators'. A mere division of the characters into 'customers and servers' can already bring about a play within a play. - Robert James Nelson, *Play within a Play: the Dramatist's Conception of his Art. Shakespeare to Anouilh* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), p. 116.

[76] Woodward, 'European Anti-Melodrama', pp. 34-47 (p. 34).

paradoxical seeming',[77] a fact which has certain repercussions on the reception of the work of art as 'the relationship of the inner play to the outer play... [prefigures] the relationship between the outer play and the reality within which it occurs: life'.[78] Consequently, the objectifying observation to which the couple are subjected by their social environment enables the audience to assume a position from which it can subject the film to its own objectifying looks. In her 1990 article Judith Mayne therefore argues convincingly that the fact that Emmi's and Ali's relationship is turned into a spectacle for consumption corresponds to the medium of cinema as an instrument of reification.

> [C]inema illuminates the extent to which reification pervades social life in the particular guise of the spectacle, precisely because of the extent to which the pleasure and the manipulation of cinema revolve around the organisation of looks, gazes and eye contact.[79]

Consequently, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* 'raises many crucial issues... that focus precisely on the conditions of film viewing', and among them 'the relationship between viewer and screen'.[80] Faced with the fact of prejudiced watching him/herself, the spectator's watching is analogous to, but independent of the neighbours' objectifying gazes: the spectator becomes rather self-conscious. Paradoxically, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, a film which was to some extent inspired by what Fassbinder perceived in Sirk's work as the perspective of involvement, does not stop at 'intense emotion',[81] but rather exceeds the emotional intensity of melodrama by shedding a critical light on the medium itself. By means of the dramaturgical device of the play within the play Fassbinder succeeds in making his spectator feel *and* think.

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[77] Nelson, *Play within a Play*, p. 10.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Mayne, Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*', pp. 353-369 (p. 368).
[80] Ibid., p. 354.
[81] Ibid., p. 359.

III.3.4 The Further Development of the *antiteater*'s Artificial Use of Language within the Melodramatic Framework

Unlike in the earlier film *Katzelmacher*, in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* language is clearly used in a transitive way, that is in order to establish a relationship between the interlocutors. Although the main characters' obviously find it quite difficult to use the German language as means to establish and maintain an emotional contact, both characters make a considerable effort to do just that. Whilst Ali's knowledge of the German language is little more than rudimentary and Emmi repeatedly seeks to boost her confidence by taking recourse to the ready-made proverbs and sayings which the German language provides, the particular use of intonation and voice inflection makes it quite clear that language in the 1973 film is no longer a means for artificial self-representation, but a communicative means for the establishment of an emotional bond between human beings. Thus, although it is true that the characters' communicative skills are very much restricted and that they betray little practice in using the German language as a means for authentic, emotional communication, Franklin's argument that language in the film is more of 'a barrier to rather than a means of communication' only holds true for the rational aspect of language use. [82]

However, as the characters make a considerable effort to use the German language to maintain their relationship, their difficulties in using this language accurately increasingly catch up with them in a way which places the film firmly within the melodramatic framework. For as the main characters are increasingly excluded from social intercourse, language in the film is repeatedly interrupted by long pauses of silence to the effect that, silence, rather than the other way round, appears to be 'interrupted by short bursts of speech'.[83] As the social pressure exercised thus lays open the fact that there is a silence at the heart of the protagonists' relationship, which they themselves may not be aware of, Fassbinder's implementation of language is very much in line with what Peter Brooks defines as the core issue of melodrama:

[82] Franklin, 'Method and Message', 182-199 (p. 183).
[83] Ibid., p. 191.

> the different kinds of drama have their corresponding sense deprivations: for tragedy, blindness, since tragedy is about instinct and illumination; for comedy, deafness, since comedy is concerned with problems in communication, misunderstandings and their consequences, and melodrama, muteness, since melodrama is about expression.[84]

Evidently, as the long pauses of silence bring out an undercurrent in the characters' communication, they mark the point where the use of language in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* intersects with the concerns of the melodramatic genre.

While Fassbinder's observation of melodrama's concern with authentic expression thus undermines the transitivity of language use, the silence in the communication between the characters considerably contributes to the emotional contact between them. For as the fragmentisation of communication does not allow the characters to discuss and sort out their differences, the couple's recourse to largely non-verbal communication covers up a whole range of differences in culture, race, sex and age. As a discussion of these differences may have prevented their marriage in the first place, it is correct to say that Emmi and Ali marry not so much in spite of their language difficulties but rather 'because of their language difficulties'.[85] Preventing any social and cultural determinants to interfere with their relationship, Emmi and Ali get married without having established a viable foundation for it, a fact which makes it easy for the members of their social environment to get in between the married couple and bring their marriage close to ruin. Consequently, as emotional contact is mainly established by non-verbal means of communication, the silence between the characters simultaneously facilitates and jeopardises Emmi's marriage .

The inversion in the relationships between communication and language and muteness and silence is rendered by a highly theatrical approach to the use of language. Two main characteristics in the use of language can be distinguished. The first one is reminiscent of Fassbinder's *antiteater* practice insofar as the main characters' language use betrays all the signs of having been imposed upon them: in Emmi's case it is the platitudes and proverbs provided by the German language, in

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[84] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, pp. 56-57.
[85] Franklin, 'Method and Message', 182-199, p. 184.

Ali's case it is the use of German as foreign language which mark the use of language as alienated. However, since these devices are used in the context of the melodramatic genre, the communication between the characters is now emotionally charged and thus goes beyond the icy gloss, which is so striking about the use of language in *Katzelmacher*. This effect is mainly brought about by the second aspect of the language use in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. For as the characters' verbal interaction is often interrupted by pauses of silence of considerable length, the spoken words are charged with emotion and thus gain significance within the course of the story. Since both these devices bring about highly theatrical effects, the use of language in the film indeed rests on media interplay.

Although Emmi's language still betrays some traces of that language which is typical of Fassbinder's earlier film *Katzelmacher* when she, for instance, confuses the gender of cola and orders 'ein Cola' in the first sequence of the film, the main peculiarity is the frequent use of truisms and proverbs. Rather melancholically, she tells Ali 'Arbeit ist das halbe Leben' (Work is half of life), as she considers her life after she has been escorted home by the foreigner. Similarly, when Ali tells her subsequently that an Arab mother would never be neglected by her children in the way she is, she replies by means of another proverb: 'Andere Länder, andere Sitten' (Other countries, other customs). As Emmi thus reveals her way of thinking as strongly influenced by the unquestioned propositions offered to her by language, the rudimentary German which Ali makes use of in order to communicate subjects him to the criticism of his social environment. When he asks the local grocer for a piece of margarine: 'Libelle. Gleiche wie Butter', the shopkeeper intentionally refuses to understand the request. Thus, while Emmi's language betrays the signs of social conformity, Ali is subjected to it. However, in each case the characters speak a language which is not their own.

This kind of language use is reminiscent of the language deformation which has already been considered in the context of *Pre-Paradise sorry now* and *Katzelmacher*. However, while in the two earlier works the distortion of spoken language results in a highly artificial way of communication, the deformation of language in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* appears to be primarily due to the milieu in

which the film is set. Thus, although Emmi's and Ali's use of the German language is still stylised, the fascination with artificial language, on which Fassbinder thrived on under the influence of the mass medium, is now further developed in order to meet the needs of the melodramatic genre. Interestingly, this brings his use of character language a lot closer to that kind of language use which may have set off his initial quest for a more artificial use of language in the theatre. It bears decidedly more similarities to that naturalistic use of language, which Patterson has pointed out as typical of the representations of documentary television.[86] Thus, similar to the implementation of artificial language in *Katzelmacher*, Fassbinder's own theatre practice appears to provide the relay station between the linguistic innovations of television and the artistic needs of his melodrama.

As the main characters' verbal form of expression is open to being questioned, it is the non-verbal form of communication, which is more reliable as to the characters' state of mind. For as silent still images frequently punctuate the interaction, they give a powerful impression of the characters' helplessness. This is for instance the case in the eleventh sequence of the film in which Emmi undertakes a cautious attempt to tell her colleagues about her new relationship. As her enthusiasm is quickly stifled by their contemptuous remarks about foreign workers, Emmi, silenced and thoughtful, just stares into the distance, thus literally bringing the film's dramatic movement to a standstill for 10 or 15 seconds. Similarly, when Emmi and Ali celebrate their wedding in a posh Munich restaurant in the 19th sequence of the film, the couple just stare ahead into the camera for almost 20 seconds as they, without any guests to celebrate with them, have nothing to say to each other. As the characters' silence is hardly made up for by other voices, noises or music, Franklin, referring to Susan Sontag, has described the effect of these pauses as a 'weighting of words'.[87] Silence amplifies the power of the spoken words, lending them creative (or destructive) powers.

As Fassbinder's implementation of long pauses of silence endows the spoken word with a considerable amount of power over the psyche of the main characters, this aspect of the film's language use, too, is much more in tune with a form of

[86] See section III.2.4 for relevant quotation.
[87] Franklin, 'Method and Message', 182-199 (p. 190).

language use which is common in the theatre. For it is here, in the theatre, that the creation of the work of art primarily relies on the power of the word rather than that of the images. However, while in the theatre it is the act of pronunciation itself which allows the word to unfold its auratic power and contribute towards the creation of a world which can be quite removed from the reality of everyday life, in Fassbinder's film it is not the production of spoken words but the impact which they have on the listener which lends them power. As this emphasis on reaction is, as will be explained in more detail in the context of Fassbinder's last television series *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, what the aesthetics of television drama thrives on, it is actually the transposition of a televisual device which situates the implementation of language use in the proximity of theatre's way of making use of language. Thus, theatrical and televisual devices work together in order to bring out the reactivity of the main characters in Fassbinder's melodramatic film.

As the characters' difficulties in the use of the German language are thus effected by artistic devices which have been developed in interaction with theatre and television aesthetics, media interplay provides the basis for Fassbinder's characterisation of the characters' use of language as alienated. For as Ali's use of German as a foreign language, Emmi's frequent self-consolation by means of truisms and proverbs and the long pauses of silence in between the individual utterances make it clear that the characters are not in control of the language they use and rather take in the language they are subjected to by their social environment, all these devices contribute to the externalisation to the characters' re-active outsider mentality. However, since the devices used for this exteriorisation have been identified as formal and functional modifications of those devices which were developed in the *antiteater* under the influence of television's representational conventions, the use of language in Fassbinder's 1973 anti-melodrama features the same correspondence between two structures of internalisation which is characteristic of the filmmaker's entire work, namely the fact that the internalisation of social values is externalised by the film's comprising of theatrical and televisual aesthetic devices.

III.3.5 Theatrical Tableaux and Shot / Reverse Shot - Camera Work and Editing in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*

Fassbinder's implementation of filmic means and devices in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* is clearly determined by his wish to do justice to the 'reality of feelings'. Unlike in the earlier film *Katzelmacher*, the director no longer imposes the camera on the characters, but has it go along with them in order to catch what is happening in between them. The camera no longer observes the constancy of the size of the characters, frontal images are joined by unusual camera angles, and the monochrome film material has been replaced by colour film. By the same token, the equation one sequence equals one shot has been replaced by a (slightly) more accelerated speed of narration, which allows the spectator to follow the character's emotional movements. Thus the stylised monotony used to purport the denouncing perspective, which is so characteristic of the early film, is largely replaced by a visual language which facilitates what the filmmaker envisaged as the perspective of emotional involvement. As this perspective facilitates emotional climaxes of various kinds, he clearly moves in the direction of the representational conventions of melodrama insofar as this genre thrives on strong emotional build-ups.

Having said that, it is equally striking to see that Fassbinder is nonetheless careful to keep a certain distance from his characters. His perspective of involvement never allows the spectator to identify with the characters, but treats them with the respect, which is due to every independent individual. Thus, the implementation of filmic representational devices in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* is marked by an outstanding scrutiny, unrelenting insistence and even impartiality. Camera and editing interfere with the acting as little as possible; despite the film's emphasis on watching Fassbinder's camera is rarely personalised. As the implementation of the filmic devices does not suggest to take sides with either of the parties involved in the conflict, it merely organises the interplay of spectacle and gazes in the film. Obviously, such a phenomenology of human behaviour does not explain the motivations and intentions of the characters; they have to be deducted from their behaviour. As the emotional build-up is therefore recognised as problematic and not

self-gratifying, the impartiality of Fassbinder's perspective works against the emphasis on emotional intensity as it is proper to the melodramatic genre.

As the impartiality of Fassbinder's perspective undermines the melodramatic desire for strong emotional build-ups, the respectful distance, which Fassbinder keeps from his characters, nonetheless supports his perspective of emotional involvement. For the phenomenological approach to human interaction enables the director to make use of a wide range of visual devices which are designed to externalise the subjective reality of the characters. Fassbinder takes the attributes of melodramatic polarisation quite literally and translates them into a visual language so that his visual style centres on the separation and the clash of various oppositions. As this kind of externalisation does not infringe on the characters' right to their private thoughts and feelings and is yet able to convey them, the filmmaker positions the audience in a way which, although forestalling easy identification, still allows the audience to experience what happens in the characters' minds. As the audience thus finds itself in a position analogous to that of the characters, the combination of phenomenological distance and emotional involvement does not encourage an attitude of comfortable sitting-back, but one of rather self-conscious involvement instead.

It is striking to see that although the artistic rendition of his new perspective of emotional involvement takes means and devices on board which belong to the repertoire of classical cinematic representation, it still relies on media interplay to a large extent. For as all the main areas of visual representation contribute to the representation of melodramatic polarisation, they achieve highly theatrical effects. Firstly, Fassbinder's selection of camera positions, which is often reminiscent of *Katzelmacher* in that it emphasises stasis and frontality, uses the frame in order to separate or link up characters according to their position within the melodramatic conflict. Secondly, in order to represent the points of contact between the melodramatic opponents, the filmmaker takes recourse to the most conventional of classical filmic devices, the shot / reverse shot. Finally, Fassbinder makes use of a wide range of camera movements, predominantly when there is 'movement' in between the melodramatic 'front lines'. As the implementation of all these devices

brings about theatrical effects, on the level of visual representation, too, media interplay plays an important role.

In *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* Fassbinder uses the positioning of the camera in a way which enables the frame to convey the sense of isolation or togetherness of the characters shown. The use of this framing device often goes together with static camera positions, which facilitate double framing as much as the kind of frontality which has already been considered in the context of *Katzelmacher*. A fitting example for the way in which the director combines the framing of the characters with double framing and a frontal camera position is the 19th sequence of the film in which Emmi and Ali 'celebrate' their wedding in a posh Munich restaurant. A long shot takes the couple frontally against the back wall of the room while the camera is situated in an adjacent room, so that they are double-framed by the doorframe in the partition. As the fact that Emmi and Ali are framed together emphasises their sense of togetherness, long shot, double framing and the frontal position of the camera shed a rather critical light on their happiness. Whilst the long shot makes them look rather lonely in the otherwise empty restaurant, double framing and frontality stress the sense of the oppression and helplessness which they may feel in the outsider position into which they have manoeuvred themselves.

Although the sheer complexity of the image composition makes it quite clear that Fassbinder is moving away from the minimalism of his early films, a consideration of its individual elements reveals that it is still very much indebted to the style of the *antiteater* years. Thus it is not surprising that this visual language brings about a sense of heightened theatricality in the film. In fact, the mis-en-scene of the sequence described above resembles the spatial set-up of a theatre in many ways. The second frame within the picture, for instance, gives the spectator a sense of being separated from the two protagonists like a theatregoer may feel it when he watches the play of the actors on the other side of the proscenium arch. Similarly, the combination of long shot and frontal position of the camera reduces the filmic possibilities of expression by means of camera movement to the effect that it parallels the viewing conditions in the theatre. As the main characters are thus almost literally put on a stage, it is the theatrical analogy which brings out their social

isolation in the consequence of the melodramatic polarisation between Emmi and Ali on the one hand and the members of their social environment on the other.

Whilst the framing together of characters is mainly applied when one of the parties involved in the conflict is framed,[88] the clashes along the melodramatic 'front lines' are by and large represented by shot/ reverse shots. No matter whether Emmi argues with her colleagues, neighbours or children, the shot/ reverse shot combination is obviously the appropriate device to convey the irritation caused by direct confrontation. Thus, although the frequent use of tableau arrangements gives the film a long-windedness which time and again makes the film's time structure approximate real time, its application is by far not as uncompromising as in the early film *Katzelmacher*. For example, the application of a number of shot/ reverse shot combinations makes the average length of the 25 shots, which cover the roughly eight minutes of the first sequence, amount to 19,7 seconds. Consequently, although the use of shot/ reverse shots still leaves the film's speed of narration trailing behind what could be called the Hollywood standard, it is decidedly faster than the one used in *Katzelmacher*. Obviously, Fassbinder's endeavour to give proper representation to the disturbance, which the story's melodramatic clashes invoke, speeds up the editing rhythm of the film.

As Fassbinder makes use of the shot / reverse shot device, he takes up on an aesthetic means which the classical Hollywood cinema thrived on excessively as it was easily turned into one of the key building blocks for its continuity system.[89] However, since Fassbinder by and large reserves shot / reverse shots for those encounters which involve both parties involved in the melodramatic conflict, the function of the continuity device is virtually inverted. For although it still provides the basis for a perspective which is capable of piercing space and thus breathes life into Fassbinder's film, the fact that it is mainly used to give visual expression to the clashes between the melodramatic opponents turns the continuity device into a

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[88] As previously mentioned, Fassbinder may occasionally also frame the melodramatic opponents together. However, in accordance with the spatial separation through grouping, this is usually done by introducing a physical partition into the scene, either by means of a grid-like screen or double framing.

[89] David Bordwell et al., *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 208 ff.

discontinuity device. If this inversion is now considered in the context of the film's generally slow editing rhythm, which emerges from the aesthetic legacy of Fassbinder's earlier, strongly tableau-oriented visual style, it immediately becomes obvious that it is the adequate device to convey the disturbance which the melodramatic clashes may cause to the characters involved. Thus the integration of the genuinely filmic device into melodramatic framework, makes it contribute to the theatricality of the film's visual language.

What has just been pointed out about the implementation of shot / reverse shots in Fassbinder's film *mutatis mutandis* also goes for the use of camera movements in the film. In the context of the generally slow movement of the film, the by and large economical use of camera movements take on a specific significance: while shot / reverse shots give visual expression to the clashes between the opponents, camera movements are used to show the movements between the front lines as it were. A long tracking shot conveys the casual boredom of the barmaid once she has resolved to take Emmi's orders in the first sequence, a tilt upwards purports the malicious curiosity of Emmi's spying neighbour Frau Kargus (Elma Karlowa) when Emmi and Ali leave the house together in the tenth sequence, and describes a wavering half circle when Emmi breaks down in tears in the film's climactic scene. As camera movements are thus employed to convey the changing balance of power between the two parties, their employment is clearly determined by the melodramatic conflict itself. Consequently, the camera movements in the film, too, help bring out the theatricality inherent in the melodramatic conflict.

As the implementation of film's own means and devices contributes to the theatricality of *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, it is by means of media interplay that the characters' states of mind are externalised. For as the various camera positions convey the couple's sense of togetherness, isolation and oppression, and shot / reverse shots as well as camera movements purport the disturbance and fragile balance of power between the parties involved, the implementation of the filmic means of representation is geared towards the conveyance of the effect which the melodramatic conflict has on the protagonists. As the externalisation of these states of mind emerges from a theatrical way of implementing the filmic means of

expression, the visual language of the film confirms what has been pointed out as the stylistic basis of Fassbinder's artistic approach, the correspondence of two structures of internalisation on the film's thematic and formal levels. Just as the main characters internalise the pressure which their social environment exercises on them, the medium of film, which has been selected to tell their story, takes artistic elements on board whose aesthetic effect is highly theatrical and thereby alien to the medium of film.

In conclusion it can be said that Fassbinder's appropriation of the melodramatic genre continues along the lines of reciprocal media interplay between film and theatre as it was envisaged in the context of the early films and plays. Acting, language, mise-en-scene and even the filmic means like camera work and editing are employed in order to bring out the theatricality inherent in the melodramatic conflict. However, since the film was also made under the impression of previous television production experiences, Fassbinder presents us with a melodrama as positive as it can possibly get: the heroine appears to be able to overcome her inhibitions and indeed takes action while the members of her social environment resolve to suppress their prejudices. There is no catastrophic ending; hope and hopelessness are kept in a balance in the film's ambiguous ending. As this inversion of melodrama's typical structure should make one expect melodrama to become obsolete, it is hard to support Eric Rentschler's opinion that Fassbinder merely instrumentalises melodrama as a 'narrative strategy' in order to reach a wide audience.[90] Instead, as the director reveals the socio-psychological origin of the genre, the internalisation of social values, which condemns his protagonists to re-activity, he actually forces the spectator to take melodrama seriously.

[90] Eric Rentschler, *New German Film in the Course of Time* (Bedford Hills, New York: Redgrave, 1984), p. 84.

Ce qui différence
les païens de nous,
c'est qu'à l'origine
de toutes leurs croyances,
il y a un terrible effort
pour ne pas penser en hommes,
pour garder le contact
avec la création entière
c'est-à-dire avec la divinité.

Antonin Artaud
(Quotation taken from
*Satansbraten*, 1976)

## III.4

## *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden* - The Melodrama of the Tragic Condition

### III.4.1 The Idea of the Double - Artaud's Influence on Fassbinder

Whilst the films made by Fassbinder in the first half of the 1970s by and large follow the aesthetics of what Woodward has termed the 'anti-melodrama', the cinema films produced in the second half of that decade clearly move away from the earlier approach. Although Fassbinder still concerns himself with the question of how the characters' genuine endeavour to realise their wish for emancipation and happiness clashes with their internalisation of social values and patterns of behaviour, the characters' previous attitude of sincerity is replaced by a deliberate attempt at self-creation. In an attempt to free themselves from some intolerable condition, they begin *consciously* to identify themselves with some incarnation of the internalised social role model. On the basis of such self-objectification the characters overcome the melodramatic silence of Fassbinder's Douglas Sirk-inspired films and regain the ability to articulate themselves. However, as it is not their own voices they recover,

they become no more than *media*, i.e. mouthpieces, for the internalised social other. As the split in the personalities of Fassbinder's characters is thus overcome by deepening it,[91] the cinema films made in the second half of the 1970s are more radical in their attempt to simultaneously step outside and stay within the generic framework of melodrama.

Practically all of the cinema films, which Fassbinder made from 1976 onwards, follow the new approach of the questioning of identity on the level of the story. In *Satan's Brew* (Satansbraten, 1976) the would-be poet Walter Kranz writes a poem entitled *Der Albatross* only to find out that the poem, whose composition enables him to overcome a long period of lacking inspiration, had already been written by the German symbolist poet Stephan George. Subsequently he stylises himself to be another Stephan George. Likewise, the protagonist of *Despair* (*Despair - Eine Reise ins Licht*, 1977), Hermann Hermann, commits a murder in the attempt to assume another identity, and Erwin/Elvira of *In a Year with 13 Moons* (In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden, 1978) undergoes a sex change operation in order to attract the man he fell in love with. The pattern of changing one's identity for the sake of articulation also applies to the film *The Third Generation* (Die dritte Generation, 1979) in which a cell of terrorists plan an assassination attempt while being totally unaware of the fact that their political identity is obscured by its leader being a double agent. Moreover, the pattern can be extended to Fassbinder's most successful film *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (Die Ehe der Maria Braun, 1978), and his last film *Querelle* (1982).

However, the new approach not only radicalises the issues dealt with in the films, but also their aesthetic rendition. As the near identity of self and internalised other gives the characters a surplus of energy, which sometimes discharges itself in sudden fits of ecstasy, the slow acting style of the early films would hardly be able to convey its disturbing and occasionally electrifying effect. As it is therefore replaced by an acting style which is not only faster but also more forceful and even expressively overacted, it hardly comes as a surprise that the balance between the

[91] In his book *Fassbinder – The Life and Work of a Provocative Genius*, Christian Braad Thomsen actually takes the idea of the double as the starting point for his biographical approach to Fassbinder's work. He locates the origin of the issue in Fassbinder's own personality and interprets his entire work from this vantage point.

portion of action shown in any particular shot or sequence and the time allocated to it is changed in favour of the action. However, the shift in this ratio is not only due to the change in the acting style, but also to the support it receives from the more accelerated editing rhythm. For although the films' movement is still discernibly slower than what may be considered the average speed of filmic narration, the editing rhythm has been noticeably accelerated. These changes may hardly be called extraordinary, however, considered in the context of other features characteristic of Fassbinder's visual language, they bring about a truly disturbing effect. For as the director's narrative strategy has never been eloquent or even explanatory, the acceleration of acting and editing gives the late cinema films a truly labyrinthine aesthetics.

As the defining characteristic of Fassbinder's new aesthetic approach to cinematic representation is thus to be found in the profound will to unsettle the audience, Christian Braad Thomsen, who first discussed the changing perspective in Fassbinder's films of the second half of the 1970s in a critical way, describes the new approach under the overarching term of terrorism. Given this perspective, it is not surprising that he places the 1979 film *The Third Generation* at the centre of the new aesthetic approach:

> Wenn man davon ausgeht, daß der Film 'Satansbraten' eine radikale Neuorientierung im Filmemachen Fassbinders darstellt, einen Bruch mit der Douglas Sirk Inspiration und ein Aufbrechen in bisher unbekannte Bereiche - und zwar nicht nur für Fassbinder, sondern für die Filmkunst überhaupt - so scheint mir 'Die dritte Generation' das erste Meisterwerk Fassbinders im Sinne dieser neuen Ästhetik zu sein, wozu außerdem 'Satansbraten', 'Ein Jahr mit 13 Monden' und zum Teil auch 'Eine Reise ins Licht' gehören.[92]

Although the terrorist events of 1977 had indeed a strong impact on Fassbinder's outlook on life - this is well documented by his contribution to the omnibus film *Germany in Autumn* (Deutschland im Herbst, 1977)[93] - the fact that the director's

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[92] Christian Braad Thomsen, 'Fassbinder und der Terrorismus', *Text und Kontext*, 1 (1980), 146-164 (p. 158).

[93] Fassbinder contributed the first episode to this film, whose individual parts were directed by directors as diverse as Alf Brustellin, Alexander Kluge, Maximilliane Mainka, Edgar Reitz, Volker Schlöndorff et al. Fassbinder's episode consists of two interwoven strands of action one of which shows him in a fierce political discussion in which he seeks to denounce his mother's secretly

reorientation set in well before the autumn of 1977 makes it clear that his 'terrorism' was not triggered off by these historical events. Rather, as the new artistic approach was first put into practice in the 1976 film *Satan's Brew*, which carries the quotation from Artaud's writings cited above, Fassbinder's aesthetic reorientation appears to be much more due to a turn towards an Artaudian aesthetics of cruelty and disturbance than to the aesthetic demands of terrorism as an artistic subject.[94]

Although new in the context of Fassbinder's own work for the cinema, the director's turn towards an aesthetics of cruelty in the tradition of Antonin Artaud in the second half of the 1970s is not entirely unprecedented in his work. For as Yaak Karsunke has pointed out, the early performances of the *Action-* and *antiteater* were already inspired by Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty,[95] an assessment which has been confirmed in the chapters on Fassbinder's theatre work contained in the present work. Although the early plays use violence as a form of *social* transcendence rather than a means to explore the question of identity and although the director further developed his aesthetic devices over the years to the effect that aesthetic confusion and lack of transcendence became characteristic features of *Garbage, the City and Death*, the basic fact remains that both, early plays as well as late cinema films, follow the Artaudian principles of disturbance and irritation. When Thomsen therefore argues that certain aspects of Fassbinder's late cinema films resume strategies which are known from some of Fassbinder's plays,[96] then the reference to Artaud's aesthetics of cruelty appears to provide much of this statement's basis.

The new aesthetic approach in the cinema of the late 1970s has repercussions on the way in which Fassbinder views the aesthetic interrelationship between his cinema films and his made-for-TV films. Whereas the aesthetics of *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* deliberately draws on television aesthetics insofar as the director's previous television

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totalitarian ideas, whilst in the other one he denounces his own, little less than fascist behaviour towards with life-companion Armin Meier.

[94] Christian Braad Thomsen recognises this when he points out that Fassbinder uses 'Irritation als ästhetisches Prinzip': 'In den Douglas Sirk-inspirierten Filmen (...) hat es immer einen positiven Identifikationspunkt gegeben, eine Figur, in die das Publikum nach Hollywood-Art seine Gefühle investieren konnte, auch wenn die betreffende Person im Film kritisiert wurde. Diesen Identifikationspunkt gibt es in den radikaleren Fassbinder-Filmen nicht mehr.' ('Fassbinder und der Terrorismus', pp. 158-159)

[95] Karsunke, 'anti-teatergeschichte', pp. 7-16 (pp. 8-9).

[96] Thomsen, 'Fassbinder und der Terrorismus', 146-164 (p. 146).

production experience inspired a more positive representation of everyday life, the aesthetics of the late cinema films clearly moves away from the idea of aesthetic interplay with the mass medium.

> Gerade bei den Kinofilmen, die ich ganz allein und ohne öffentliche Mittel finanziert habe, wie bei 'In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden' oder 'Die dritte Generation'. Die sind sehr viel kompromißloser; ich würde die für's Fernsehen nicht so gemacht haben.[97]

Although Fassbinder traces the new aesthetics back to the particular way in which two of the late films were funded, the shift in emphasis is unequivocal. Obviously, Fassbinder ceases to consider television as an ally in the search for appropriate means of expression. However, as this development only applies to Fassbinder's cinema films, the recourse to his own, in many ways rather Artaudian theatre aesthetics ensues a new differentiation between his cinema films and his made-for-TV films: while the cinema films become aesthetically more radical in the consequence of the filmmaker's increasingly uncompromising attitude, the TV films by and large continue along more clearly melodramatic lines.

As the 1978 film *In a Year with 13 Moons* is certainly the most unsettling film Fassbinder ever made, it is this film which has been selected for close investigation. In fact, conceived of as a very personal response to the suicide of his long-term life-companion, Armin Meier, the film formulates the pain of a lost identity in a more radical way than ever before, making it the 'bleakest, most complex, and arguably most cinematically interesting feature-length dramatization of the themes of emotional exploitation and neglect'.[98] Given this very personal motivation, it is not surprising that Fassbinder did no leave anything to chance: the director not only scripted and directed the film, but also selected props and costumes himself, did all the camera work and eventually even edited the film. However, since the film is not only an excellent example for Fassbinder's endeavour to carry Artaud's ideas of disturbance and irritation into the medium of film, but has also been pointed out by the director himself as a primary example for his new, uncompromising cinema aesthetics, an aesthetic exploration of this film will not only provide the possibility to

[97] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 153.
[98] Watson, *Understanding Fassbinder*, p. 176.

show the different ways in which the aesthetics of cruelty has enriched his cinema aesthetics, but also how the new configuration of aesthetic devices results in a new relationship between cinema's and television's different representational forms and conventions.

### III.4.2 Creating a Dramatic Curve on the Basis of an Episodic Structure - The Dramatic Structure of *In a Year with 13 Moons*

While *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* demonstrates how a personal relationship is put into jeopardy by its being established helter-skelter, *In a Year with 13 Moons* shows how the protagonist loses all control over her life in the consequence of a similarly hasty attempt to take action. In his 1978 film Fassbinder tells the story of Elvira Weishaupt (Volker Spengler) who underwent a sex change operation in order to attract her then colleague at the abattoir, Anton Saitz (Gottfried John). However, as this sacrifice failed to impress the other man, Elvira, having 'crossed an absolute border',[99] the border between sexual identities as they have evolved in the course of Western civilisation, is condemned to live a life as her own other. Thus, with her soul dislocated to such an extent that her destiny's stars are no longer situated in her chest, as Friedrich Schiller put it in his *Wallenstein*, Elvira appears to be dependent on the constellations on the firmament again. In keeping with the quotation from Artaud, which precedes the film *Satan's Brew*, Fassbinder therefore suggests in a rolling title that a year with thirteen moons can cause a personal catastrophe:

> Every seventh year is a year of the moon. Certain people, whose existence is influenced mainly by their emotions, suffer from intense depressions during these moon years. ... And when a moon year is also a year with thirteen new moons, it often results in inevitable personal catastrophes.[100]

As such a notion of fate, which here takes a rather cosmogonic shape, sways the

[99] Burgoyne, 'Narrative and Sexual Excess', 51-61 (p. 51).
[100] Transl. in Sandra Frieden, 'In the Margins of Identity: Fassbinder's *In a Year of 13 Moons*', in *Gender and German Cinema: Feminist Interventions* (Providence, Oxford: Berg, 1993), pp. 51-58 (p. 52).

cradle of theatre, i.e. tragedy in particular, Elvira's lack of control appears to put her destiny in line with Clifford Leech's definition of tragedy insofar as this genre 'allows minimal free will in that a particular act sets off the train of events that leads to disaster, that what follows is beyond human control'.[101]

However, although condemned unilaterally to maintain a relationship, which would never materialise, Elvira is far from giving in to her tragic situation. Indeed, driven by a strong desire for love and personal satisfaction in a relationship, Elvira makes a considerable effort to leave the past behind, take action and get on with her life as a woman. She not only tries to overcome the failed relationship with Anton Saitz by laying open in an interview the abominable business practices of a man, who, in the meantime, has become an influential real estate agent in the City of Frankfurt, but also enters into new relationships with other men such as the actor Christoph Hacker (Karl Scheydt). As this relationship fails as well, she accepts the help offered by the prostitute Rote Zora (Ingrid Caven) and begins to work through her problematic past and lets herself be introduced to Seelenfieda (Walter Bockmayer) who suffered a similarly disturbing destiny. Moreover, as she understands that her interview about Anton Saitz puts the future of her daughter Marie-Ann (Eva Mattes) into jeopardy, she is even prepared to apologise to the business man. Thus taking pains to take control of her life, Elvira's activities are geared towards repressing the melodramatic effects of her tragic situation.

Whilst Elvira's attempts at taking control of her life are aimed at counteracting the effects of her tragic situation, her activism enables Fassbinder to convey his protagonist's fundamental inability to take control. For although all the various encounters which she has as she wanders around the City of Frankfurt help Elvira understand her present situation and her past better, her attempts at breaking out of her social isolation and integrating with people are marred by her severe lack of self-confidence. Each time she manages to establish a contact with a new person, she sets out with excessive and rather unjustified hope and thereby provokes a rejection which will make her end up in disappointment and despair. As she thus keeps reiterating the same basic pattern, all her social intercourse is turned into

[101] Clifford Leech, *Tragedy* (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 40.

confrontations, a fact which makes enter through the back door what was to be avoided: melodrama. Time and again forced back into her outsider position, the fulfilment of her desire is postponed indefinitely, a prospect which eventually prompts her to commit suicide. As the attempts at avoiding melodrama thus catch Elvira in a vicious circle in which what is to be avoided is actually provoked, her activism highlights her lack of control over her life.

In order to give Elvira's story of being caught in a melodramatic trap an appropriate form Fassbinder simultaneously draws on two different theatrical structural devices. On the one hand the film consists of a succession of episodes which are so self-contained that it is actually possible, as Douglas Crimp has noted, to watch the film 'spliced together out of sequence'.[102] This relative flexibility of the scenes' sequence puts the film's narrative structure in line with that dramatic pattern which the theatre developed vis-à-vis the growing popularity of film during the first decades of the 20th century: the expressionist *Stationendrama*.[103] On the other hand, however, the 'more or less self-contained episodes do follow a certain narrative logic'[104] in that their succession does make up what is traditionally known as a dramatic curve. Exposition, complication, climax, denouement and catastrophe are clearly discernible across the individual episodes. As the film's dramatic structure thus comprises two structures which can be traced back to two different traditions within the history of theatrical representation, the dramatic structure of *In a Year with 13 Moons* rests on extensive aesthetic interplay with the medium of theatre.

The film opens with three consecutive rejections and thus introduces into Elvira's predicament. In the opening sequence Elvira is shown as she tries to buy sex from a male homosexual prostitute in the early morning hours on the banks of the River Main in Frankfurt. However, as she is soon found out not to be a man but a woman, the prostitute feels betrayed to the effect that Elvira is seriously beaten up.

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[102] Douglas Crimp, 'Fassbinder, Franz, Fox, Elvira, Erwin, Armin, and All the Others' *October*, 21 (1982), 63-81 (p. 71).

[103] The most prominent example for the expressionist *Stationendrama* is certainly Georg Kaiser's play *Von Morgens bis Mitternachts*. However, a direct link between German dramatic expressionism and Fassbinder's aesthetics is not easily drawn. In the context of the present approach to Fassbinder's work one may therefore have reason to consider the more immediate effect of television aesthetics which is equally marked by an episodic structure.

[104] Crimp, 'Fassbinder, Franz, Fox, Elvira, Erwin, Armin, and All the Others', 63-81 (p.71).

Having returned to her home she is rejected for the second time as it is now her long-term life-companion Christoph who reproaches her with her lack of soul and confidence and leaves her for good. As this event brings her together with the prostitute Rote Zora, she is given a short break: showing her around her former work place, the abattoir, Elvira tells her the story of her life before she is rejected for the third time. As Elvira is asleep in her flat, her former wife Irene (Elisabeth Trissenaar) comes around in order to make it very clear to her that the interview in which she laid open Anton Saitz's business practices means a great danger for their mutual child's future. As Elvira is thus confronted with her sexual, personal and social inabilities, the first sequences of the film introduce into the main character's problematic insofar as they show how the world gradually closes in on her.

Elvira does not respond to this situation by addressing the three issues directly; instead she seeks to break out of her social isolation by eluding her problems: she goes to the local video arcade quite obviously in order to find another man. However, as she turns herself into an object rather than acts as a subject she is quickly turned away. As she hides in a corner crying it is not until Rote Zora picks her up and points in a more constructive direction that Elvira recovers. Zora takes her to Seelenfrieda, a character who apparently suffered from similar psychological problems. However, although this visit is supposed to help Elvira, she is hardly listened to as Seelenfrieda is far too busy exposing her own psychological dilemma. In a second attempt to help her, Zora takes Elvira to the nunnery in which young Erwin was raised. However, as Sister Gudrun (Lilo Pempeit) tells the story of how Erwin was abandoned by his mother for egotistic reasons, Elvira collapses in the cloister. Thus, as neither Elvira's nor Zora's method of dealing with her problems prove to be successful, the three attempts at making Elvira break out of her isolation and reintegrate with society rather aggravate and complicate her situation than better it.

Her self-esteem having thus brought down to a historical low, Elvira decides to go and see Anton Saitz in his office building to apologise for the public exposition of his business practices. This decision, which leads up to the film's climactic scene, ensues a truly labyrinthine search for the real estate agent. After having be drawn into

a conversation by one of Saitz's former employees (Peter Kollek), who was sacked for having contracted a cancer disease, Elvira loses any sense of orientation as soon as she enters the office block. Adding shock to helplessness, Elvira not only witnesses one of those faked assassination attempts which Saitz requires his body guards to practice three times a week, but also the suicide of a philosophically versed man (Bob Dorsay) who hangs himself in one of the office block's empty rooms during the night. Resuming the search for Saitz's office in the morning, she first asks a charwoman (Ursula Lillig) for directions before she finally finds one of the body guards (Günther Kaufmann) who leads her to his boss. Having thus eventually found Anton Saitz, what is meant to be the film's climactic encounter is quickly turned into an anti-climax: Anton Saitz hardly remembers Elvira, cares little about the interview she gave and finds it more important to imitate sequences from the Jerry Lewis / Dean Martin film *You're Never Too Young*.[105]

As the encounter nevertheless gives rise to some hope - Saitz not only invites Elvira to join them in their dance, but also suggests having a coffee at her place - the denouement is even harder to bear. For as Saitz finds Zora in Elvira's bedroom and sleeps with her immediately, the point at which Elvira's fortunes are reversed has been reached. As this betrayal is succeeded by another two rejections, the catastrophic ending appears inevitable. On the realisation that she has been betrayed, Elvira cuts her hair short and looks up her former wife Irene to suggest a resumption of their family life. As Irene refuses to start all over again, there is only one person left who Elvira can possibly ask for support: the writer-journalist (Gerhard Zwerenz) who interviewed her about Anton Saitz and his business practices. However, too tired to listen to her he sends her away. As the three rejections of the film's final sequences appear to echo the three rejections of the exposition, Elvira's story has thus come full circle, a fact which makes her social isolation appear complete and beyond redemption: Elvira commits suicide in her flat only to be found minutes later by all those characters with whom she had been in touch over the four or five days which preceded her death.

As the film's structure is thus composed of two different dramatic structures -

[105] *You're Never Too Young* (1955), dir. Norman Taurog.

an episodic one and the traditional dramatic curve - it is well suited to externalise the main character's frame of mind. For while the episodic structure facilitates the conveyance of the protagonist's momentary emotional movements which time and again lead to failure and defeat, the overall dramatic curve, to which the sum of the individual episodes amounts, shows that the accumulation of repeated experiences of death and rebirth downright asks for a catastrophic ending. Since these structural devices are transposed from the theatre, media interplay provides the basis for the externalisation of the main character's self-objectification. Thus, the dramatic structure of *In a Year with 13 Moons* is in line with what has been identified as the overall stylistic principle of Fassbinder's artistic work: the correspondence of two structures of internalisation on the film's thematic and formal levels. Just as Elvira repeats the internalised pattern of rejection in a continuing process of self-fulfilling prophecy, the film's structure borrows heavily from those structural devices, which the theatre developed in the course of its historical development.

### III.4.3 The Subversion of Privacy in the City. Fassbinder's Use of Decor in *In a Year with 13 Moons*

*In a Year with 13 Moons* was shot on location in Frankfurt, a city which is, ever since the housing crises towards the end of the 1960s, as renowned for its tremendous wealth as it is notorious for relentless exploitation. However, although Fassbinder thus resumes a motif which had already been used in the 1974 play *Garbage, the City and Death*, most of the settings do not suggest any of the social alienation characteristic of life in the city. Instead, the director creates an environment in which personal interaction between people still appears possible. *In a Year with 13 Moons*, very much like most of his previous films, sticks to the chamber piece dramaturgy which is characterised by the predominant use of enclosed rooms in order to unlock the wealth of the city's subculture. In this environment personal satisfaction is sought for in theatre, religion or prostitution, people walk on foot, architecture retains a

human touch as it is generally older than the 20th century, and dim light creates an intimate atmosphere in which emotions can unfold. As city life is thus viewed from the perspective of those places of refuge which people have created for themselves, the film's various settings create a world which appears as the opposite of what a film set in Frankfurt may make the spectator expect.

However, as Fassbinder approaches the city through the backdoor as it were, his choice of decor ensures that the enclosed settings are still recognisable as spaces to be found in a modern city. For as the filmmaker unfolds all his dexterity in creating elaborate sets for the acting out of Elvira's relationships, the use of decor is no longer exclusive but rather inclusive of the city's versatile and multi-layered reality. Thus, each of the film's sequences is endowed with an element which is reminiscent of the complexity of urban life. Be it the bluish light of Seelenfrieda's television screen, which starkly contrasts the otherwise candlelit room as the character recounts his nightmarish dream, the rather provocative clothes which Rote Zora wears as she and Elvira visit Sister Gudrun at the nunnery, or the Christmas carol which Rote Zora plays on the record player as she keeps switching channels on Elvira's TV set: each setting contains an element whose presence only makes sense against the background of urban life. As the use of decor thus shows that city life permeates even that social realm which seeks to separate itself from it, it serves as a reminder that the sphere of privacy and subculture portrayed does not exist independently of the city.

As the cosiness of Frankfurt's private, subcultural sphere is undermined by the signs of the complex social reality of the modern city, Fassbinder's use of decor is perfectly apt to bring out the general atmosphere of alienation in the business capital. For as the extensive use of decor within the settings as well as on the soundtrack brings the outside world into the enclosed settings of the sequences, they break up the enclosed character of the respective settings. Each of the enclosed settings embraces its own counterimage so that the ensuing clashes between incompatible elements create a whirl of visual and audible signs which facilitates a depth dimension which makes it so difficult for the spectator to transcend the events at the speed at which they are represented that he is left with a strong sense of confusion and disorientation

in a 'Kosmos, den dieser sich selbst erobern muß'.[106] As this sense of disorientation is additionally supported by camera positions whose rather low and slightly pointed upward zero-position appears to parallel that sense of subjection which Elvira experiences as she wanders from one place to the other, Fassbinder obviously remains faithful to his objective of putting the spectator in a position analogous to that of his main character.

Artistically, Fassbinder renders this confusing maze of visual and audible signs by means of media interplay. For although the selection of the various artistic devices largely goes along with the spatial reality of the city and are in this sense rather filmic, the way in which they are implemented is rather theatrical. For as all the elements of decor implemented in the film - architecture, lighting, costumes, the use of technology in the shape of cars and the modern media - create a series of contrasts which run along the line of the oppositions between old and new, light and dark, and fast and slow, they obviously serve to convey the melodramatic conflict between the main characters. While the application of the attributes of old, dark and slow is mainly restricted to the characterisation of Elvira's life style, the qualities of new, light and fast apply to the reality of modern Frankfurt and its foremost representative in the film, Anton Saitz. As Fassbinder thus creates motif chains which mirror the melodramatic polarisation between the two opposing parties in the film, the various decor elements are charged with a symbolic meaning which, in turn, makes their implementation appear rather theatrical.

As far as the use of Frankfurt's architecture is concerned, the opposition which signifies the relationship between Elvira and Anton Saitz is mainly that of old and new. While Saitz's office is situated in one of the modern high-rise buildings in the Frankfurt Westend, Elvira, who grew up behind the thick, medieval walls of the nunnery, lives in one of the petty-bourgeois tenement houses which were built during the so-called *Gründerzeit*. That these differences in architectural style are indeed significant as to the characters' states of mind becomes obvious as soon as the respective characters enter the in each case opposite sphere. As the fact that Elvira was raised in a nunnery may not have prepared her very well for a life in the modern

[106] Roth, 'Kommentierte Filmographie', pp. 119-269 (p. 221).

world, it is no surprise that she is without any sense of orientation whatsoever as soon as she enters Saitz's office block. Conversely, when Saitz comes along to Elvira's place towards the end of the film, he conquers the place immediately and does not hesitate to have sex with Zora in Elvira's bedroom. Thus, in the context of the characters' interaction it becomes quite obvious that the different architectural styles symbolise the simultaneous existence of different social and historical realities, i.e. an *Ungleichzeitigkeit* or anachronism in Kracauer's sense.[107]

Just like the use of different kinds of architecture, the different kinds of lighting used in the film divide the world of Frankfurt into two different spheres according to the mental attitude which predominates them. Whereas the low-key lighting to be found in Elvira's flat, in the video arcade, and in Seelenfrieda's apartment, which may occasionally be additionally dramatised by means of grid-like shadow patterns (10th sequence) or chiaroscuro lighting (20th sequence), creates the condition which allows the respective characters to delve into the recesses of the unconscious, the bright daylight of Frankfurt and Saitz's sphere in particular does not facilitate the unfolding of one's emotions. Bright light demands the reality principle to reign and creates the condition for the truth to be pronounced. Therefore it is not surprising that the use of high-key lighting is not restricted to the scenes set in Saitz's office block, but also applies to the scenes set at the abattoir, the fast-food restaurant, where Elvira meets Saitz's former employee, and partly also to the scene set at the nunnery. As Fassbinder's implementation of light thus largely goes along with the polarisation already found in the use of architecture, the distinction between low-key and high-key lighting visually externalises the mental attitude which predominates in the respective settings.

In the field of costumes the polarisation between Elvira and the people in her vicinity materialises as the distinction between adequate and inadequate. Whereas most of the characters in Elvira's vicinity dress according to their occupation - the prostitute Rote Zora is dressed rather provocatively while Sister Gudrun wears the traditional dress of a nun and Anton Saitz is dressed rather casually in tennis clothes - Elvira constantly changes her style in order to conceal the truth about her life. Whilst

[107] Cf. Siegfried Kracauer, *Die Angestellten* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971).

she is dressed in men's wear when she seeks to buy sex from homosexual prostitutes at the beginning of the film, in the following sequences she draws the various registers of female dressing, from a rather plain housewife's dress to a rather stylish white dress and eventually a very chic black mourning dress when she goes to see Anton Saitz. Once she has been betrayed by Saitz and Zora, she decides to cut her hair short and wear a men's suit again. However, as Elvira suggests to her former wife Irene to resume their life as a family towards the end of the film, the suit she wears is a number or two too small. Thus, while the other characters' way of dressing is not subject to change, Elvira's way of dressing, as it arrives back at the double negation indicated at the beginning of the film, comes full circle, a circle, however, which conveys the irrevocability of lost chances.

Besides the different types of architecture, the different kinds of lighting and the different ways of dressing it is also the different ways of making use of the modern media of film and television which separates the dramatic opponents from one another. While the amount of attention which Anton Saitz pays to film and television clearly associates his way of life with cinema's forms of representation - he requires his bodyguards (Günther Kaufmann, Günther Holzapfel) to fake assassination attempts on him as they are known from Hollywood gangster films and dance in his office to the music and the images of the Jerry Lewis/ Dean Martin comedy film *You're Never too Young* - Elvira is clearly more at home in the theatre: her life-companion Christoph is a failed actor and she herself becomes ecstatic as she recites Goethe's *Tasso* at the abattoir. Thus it is not surprising that she usually just ignores any running TV set in her vicinity. This goes for the TV set at Seelenfrieda's apartment just as much as for the collage of different television programmes which Zora creates in the film's tenth sequence. Whilst in the former scene television is ignored by all the characters as Seelenfrieda recounts her nightmare, in the latter Elvira lies asleep in her bed as Zora keeps switching between a report about Pinochet's regime in Chile, a French Nouvelle Vague film and a Fassbinder interview.[108] Thus, although film and television are present in Elvira's as well as

[108] Hartmut Winkler has argued that 'switching' is not only a method to de-contextualise certain images and sequences of a particular programme, but also a way to modify their meaning in order to create a balance between the subjective interests of the television viewer and the programmes offered by the stations. Faced with the 'Zeitachse des Bilderstroms' which 'erscheint nahezu diktatorisch', the

Saitz's sphere, the way it is made use of clearly aligns the two opposing parties with the old medium of theatre on the one hand and the new media of film and television on the other.[109]

As the use of decor is thus aimed at bringing out the oppositions between the dramatic opponents in the film, Fassbinder makes use of media interplay in order to externalise the character's state of mind. Although the implementation of the different types of architecture, the different kinds of lighting and costumes as well as the references to the different media indicates a move towards a less stylised and more realistic - and in this sense more filmic - way of representation, the way in which these means are implemented is more theatrical than filmic. For as the oppositions between old and new types of architecture as well as the references to old and new types of media indicate Elvira's backward and Saitz's forward-looking frame of mind respectively and the different kinds of lighting and costumes convey the characters' different moods, the use of decor externalises their internalisation of social experience to the effect that it conveys the melodramatic polarisation between the characters. As media interplay is therefore at the heart of Fassbinder's use of decor, it is in keeping with what has been identified as the overall artistic principle of his artistic work, the correspondence of two structure of the one within the other on the film's thematic and formal levels.

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viewer gives way to his own 'Unlustpotential', creating a montage of images which, in its meaning, is highly *personal*. Consequently, by having Zora switch channels Fassbinder uses the various television programmes for the representation of his own personal concerns. Thus, he creates a link between the fictional and documentary images which are circulated by television outside the diegesis and Elvira's subjective reality. - Hartmut Winkler, 'Switching, eine Verfahren gegen den Kontext', in *Filmwahrnehmung*, ed. by Knut Hickethier and Hartmut Winkler (Berlin: Ed. Sigma Bohn, 1990), pp. 137-142.

[109] Christian Metz argues that the theatre has retained something of those 'cultures which were in some sense closer to their desire (= paganism)' which would apply to Erwin/Elvira, while cinema rather purports the spirit of a 'bourgeois society, especially concerned with "elevation" (or façade)' which can be applied to Anton Saitz. This is particularly obvious in the film's climactic scene set in Saitz's office because it is here that the behaviour of the two main characters can be compared directly. - Christian Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 64-65.

III.4.4 Survival in a Foreign Space. Implementing a Choreographic Acting Style in the Environment of the City

All social interaction in *In a Year with 13 Moons* is fuelled by Elvira's strong sense of self-alienation. Elvira does not attempt to realise herself in the pursuit of some interest of her own, an interest which could possibly give her that sense of fulfilment and self-confidence which is necessary to embark upon the game of give and take of which healthy human relationships are made. Instead, as she turns herself into an object of her own desires, a fact for which her masturbation in the fifth sequence of the film is indicative, she projects her strong desire for happiness in a loving relationship onto the characters in her social environment. Thus, although she appears to be active in the sense that she does not turn apathetic and give in to disillusionment, she has nonetheless given up on actively giving shape to her own life: whenever Elvira approaches yet another character as she wanders from one place to the other in the City of Frankfurt, she does so guided by the expectation that they would be able to provide her with the solution to her problems. Thus, as Elvira's quest for togetherness and love is fuelled by her strong sense of self-alienation, her way of interacting with the other characters is essentially intransitive, a one way street.

However, while her self-alienation prompts Elvira to project her desires onto her social environment and its inhabitants, the city is certainly the wrong projection screen for these expectations because its social climate is itself characterised by alienation. As emotional issues like the one which Elvira has to deal with therefore play a subordinate role in a space which is not only inhabited by a large number of people whose social interrelations are not only dominated by economic interest, but also by technology - significantly, the two men in Elvira's life, Saitz and Christoph, are in the possession of cars whilst she and all the other characters in her vicinity are always on foot - there is practically no room for the kind of togetherness to which Elvira aspires. The seventh sequence of the film, in which the protagonist seeks to attract a man who is playing at one of the slot machines in a local video arcade, is particularly indicative for this. For as she checks her hair style rather seductively, she

is merely chased away by the man of her interest. Obviously, Elvira's subjective perception of reality clashes with the objective reality of the city. Since examples like this can be found throughout the film, it becomes quite clear that the city's social atmosphere of alienation does not facilitate the kind of emotional intercourse, which Elvira desires.

While the atmosphere of social alienation in the city thus prevents the fulfilment of Elvira's desire, the backdrop provided by the predominantly solitary life-style in the business capital makes her self-alienation quite obvious. For whereas most of the characters, who constitute the various stations in Elvira's quest for love, have put up with and even insist on their solitude in dignity, Elvira is denied any kind of assertiveness. Moving like a monad in a kind of energy sheet, she, although repeatedly rejected, constantly woos for love and attention. No matter how badly she has been hurt, it is always Elvira who, psychologically completely worn out, approaches the other characters, waits for them or endures their self-centred behaviour. This applies to her visit to Seelenfrieda just as much as to her visit to Sister Gudrun or the way in which she is taken aback by Saitz's former employee, who was sacked for the disease he contracted. However, Elvira's lack of assertiveness is most obvious in the climactic encounter between her and Anton Saitz during which she cannot deny herself a loving look to the man who effectively destroyed her life. As the social background of alienation thus brings out Elvira's lack of assertiveness, the social reality of the city reveals Elvira's self-alienation.

Artistically, the interaction of the characters in the film is, similar to the acting style in the two films considered earlier, rendered by means of an acting style, whose essentially choreographic quality betrays its roots in the *antiteater*'s performance style. However, whilst the choreographic acting style thus, very much like in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, turns the individual settings into stages for the acting out of the characters' relationships, the fact that space in *In a Year with 13 Moons* is, unlike in the earlier film, clearly prior to the interaction of the characters demands a different selection of choreographic means to show the melodramatic polarisation between the characters. Thus the characters' spatial separation and their consequent gazing at one another in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* is replaced by Elvira's repeated attempts to

approach other characters and her subsequent breakdowns at the insight of her failure. As a consequence of such repetitiveness, time assumes a rather cyclic shape complete with sudden hysteric contractions which appears to approximate those categories which are typical of theatrical representation in general and Artaud's theatre of cruelty in particular: the ideas of fate and eternity. As the spatial and temporal dimensions of the acting thus give the interaction a highly theatrical air, media interplay clearly provides its basis.

Volker Spengler's rendition of the Elvira character is clearly aimed at conveying her attempts at making the city's various spaces her own. Usually entering the settings from the side, she overtly displays her desires, obviously intending to use the respective space to change her life forever. However, as these spaces are provided and defined by the city's urban social reality, a social reality which prompts characters to move past each other and usually even avoid eye contact, there is no room for such an exhibition of emotions. As her body language thus regularly clashes with the city's social reality, Elvira suffers one breakdown after the other: When she approaches the prostitutes in the opening sequence she is seriously beaten up, as she attempts to prevent her life-companion Christoph Hacker from driving off in his car she is flung onto the street, her failed attempt to attract a man at the video arcade sends her crying in a nearby corner, and Sister Gudrun's account of her childhood makes her pass out in the cloister. Equally, as she is invited to dance along to the tune of the Jerry Lewis/ Dean Martin film in the climactic scene she loses her balance and falls over. Obviously, falling over and hiding are those elements which most clearly indicate the asymmetrical relationship between Elvira and the city.

These clashes between Elvira's subjective will to create her own space and the fact that all spaces are defined by the urban reality of social alienation give the film's use of space a highly theatrical air. For as the interaction in each sequence follows the same fundamental pattern - Elvira arrives with new hope and collapses as the result of an interaction which is conducted on the basis of different presuppositions - they all make the impression of, as Robert Burgoyne has convincingly argued, 'theatrical vignette[s] with the equivalent of an opening and a closing curtain'. However, while in the theatre the opening and the closing curtain is real and part of the

representational conventions of the medium, in Fassbinder's 1978 film the function of the curtain is taken over by the acting itself. The constant repetition of the same pattern of interaction along with the virtual absence of any dialogue hooks, which could provide the interaction with an element of continuity across the various sequences, enable the acting to achieve such a theatrical effect. Consequently, the further development of the *antiteater*'s choreographic acting style enables the director to create theatrical spaces in an environment, which does not encourage overtly emotional interaction.

As the acting style constitutes space on the basis of repeated clashes between subjective and objective reality, the film's temporal dimension is no longer continuous either. For as Elvira's continued attempts to break out of her social isolation and find happiness in a loving relationship result in the repetition of the same experience of, figuratively speaking, death and rebirth, the acting contains a strong element of repetitiveness which, in turn, constitutes time not as a continuous flow, but rather as an ongoing cycle which has the potential for the eternal recurrence of the ever same. The emotional congestion thus caused repeatedly results in sudden hysteric fits such as Elvira's nervous breakdown at the video arcade, her fainting in the cloister or her fit of angst at the sight of the faked assault on Anton Saitz in the twelfth sequence of the film. As these fits are too heavy a reaction to be explained within the respective situation, they come across as moments of awareness in which past and present experiences coincide and thus elucidate the entire predicament of Elvira's destiny. As the acting style thus emphasises the reproductive nature of Elvira's actions, it establishes time along the lines of the ideas of fate and eternity.

Such a cyclic temporal structure, which emphasises the reproductive nature of human behaviour, is not unprecedented in Fassbinder's work. In fact, it is characteristic of practically all of Fassbinder's early Artaud-inspired plays and has already been considered in the context of *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* where it was equally found to invoke the impression of fate and eternity - ideas which Georg Lukács has pointed out as typical of theatrical representation. However, as Fassbinder carries his early plays' temporal structure, a temporal structure which was itself developed in interaction with the modern media of film and television, into his 1978

cinema film, he gives it an additional twist, a twist which is apt to underpin its metaphysical message. For as Elvira's regular hysteric fits elucidate her hopeless situation in flashlights, the acting not only emphasises the cyclic character of time, but also what Artaud may have referred to when he pointed out that '[w]e are not free. The heavens can still fall upon our heads'.[110] As the metaphysical ideas of fate and eternity are thus further emphasised in a medium which is normally considered abhorrent from such ideas, the kind of temporality which is conveyed by the acting clearly rests on the aesthetic interplay with the theatre.

As Fassbinder's implementation of a rather choreographic acting style thus brings about rather theatrical effects in his cinema film, the protagonist's internalisation of the social other is externalised by means of media interplay. While the vignette character of the individual sequences, which results from the approach - failure pattern of the acting, makes it clear that Elvira's subjective reality is not only incompatible with the spaces provided by the city but also inferior to it, the seemingly eternal recurrence of this pattern shows that Elvira's state of mind is confused to such an extent that she, in an act of self-fulfilling prophesy, time and again repeats the pattern of rejection which, once experienced, has come to be the core of her personality. As these internalised patterns of social experience are rendered artistically by means of theatrical devices, the acting in Fassbinder's 1978 film is in line with what has been defined as the overall artistic principle of his artistic work, the correspondence between two structures of internalisation on the film's thematic and formal levels. Just as Elvira keeps reproducing the pattern of rejection which she had been rejected to once, this is conveyed by artistic means which have been transposed from another medium.

[110] Artaud explains this notion of fate by referring to the 'much more terrible and necessary cruelty which things can exercise upon ourselves.' – Martin Esslin, *Artaud* (London: John Calder, 1976), p. 81

III.4.5 Sound Montage and Monologues - Providing Space for the Inarticulate by Theatrical and Televisual Means

Being denied the communication with the man she loves, Anton Saitz, Elvira is largely deprived of her language. This does not mean that Elvira is not able to speak; it does, however, mean that, having been forced to repress her feelings for Anton Saitz, she is no longer able to express her feelings and thus use language in a creative way. Instead, language is used to satisfy her strong desire to share the experiences she had and communicate the sense of disorientation and helplessness, which results from them. Thus Elvira's silencing makes her overly ready to unravel intimate details about her life. There is no hesitation to lay open all the details about her marriage with Irene, her sex change operation and her relationship with the actor Christoph Hacker when the chance acquaintance with the prostitute Rote Zora offers the opportunity to do so. Moreover, Elvira even goes public in order to disclose the abominable business practices of the man who she allowed to destroy her life: the now powerful real estate agent Anton Saitz. As language is thus turned into a means for confession, self-justification and accusation, it becomes obvious that Elvira's desire to share her experiences is the outcome of the silencing of her emotions.

However, as the silencing of Elvira's emotions inspires a strong desire for communicating her experiences, the social environment provided by the city does not welcome such a use of language. For the city's social climate of alienation does not provide the space in which stories like Elvira's are received with understanding. Instead, many of the characters, which the protagonist meets as she seeks to come to terms with her situation, appear to be in the need of being listened to themselves. Unlike Elvira, however, these characters do not expect any sympathetic reactions anymore and just take the word as if they were talking to themselves. This applies to Seelenfrieda's nightmarish account of a dream just as much as to Saitz's former employee, who was sacked for having contracted a cancer disease, or to the philosopher who hangs himself in Saitz's building block. Even Sister Gudrun does not talk to Elvira as she tells her the story of her childhood, but prefers to walk up and down the cloister. As the social climate of alienation thus forces most of the film's

characters to withdraw into themselves to the extent that any opportunity is good enough to talk about themselves, there is practically no intention to listen to other people.

While the lack of communication in the urban environment does not invite Elvira's wish to share her experiences, the characters' intransitive way of relating their experiences brings out her silencing. As a rule, Elvira is (ab)used as a mere backdrop for the characters' need 'to get things off their chest'. As the protagonist is thus mainly kept in the listener's position, her contribution to the verbal communication in the film is indeed minimal: only in the first sequences of the film is Elvira still able to contribute to dialogic communication in the film: Christoph's and Irene's accusations force her into it. As Elvira is otherwise very much forced out of the City's network of communication, her own attempts at articulating herself do not take the social conditions into account and thus backfire. For whilst her attempt to damage Saitz's reputation by publicising his questionable business methods results in an humiliating attempt to apologise at the insight that she may have endangered her child's future, the trust which Elvira puts in Zora by telling her the story of her life is betrayed by her having sex with Anton Saitz towards the end of the film. As the city thus denies Elvira to share her experiences, her communicative needs are eventually completely silenced.

Like in the cinema films considered previously, the use of language in *In a Year with 13 Moons* is rendered by means of media interplay. In order to convey the rather intransitive kind of communication in the film, Fassbinder makes extensive use of a textual form which is usually associated with the theatre: the monologue. While the use of the monologue applies to both Elvira as well as the people in her social environment, the remaining difference between the two parties in the film is conveyed by an artistic technique whose roots may be found in the representational conventions of television, sound montage. As it is thus mainly in the realm of non-diegetic sound that Elvira is able to express herself, it is here that the third artistic means identifiable on the film's soundtrack comes into play. Very much in the tradition of Artaud's theatre of cruelty, Fassbinder not only uses language to convey certain portions of meaning, but also uses voice inflection and other noises to convey the respective

character's states of mind directly. As the director's use of the film's soundtrack consequently mixes artistic devices borrowed from theatre and television, his use of sound and language in the film predominantly rests on the media's aesthetic interplay.

As dialogic communication appears to be practically impossible in a space which is characterised by unbridgeable mental and social differences as described above, the essentially intransitive kind of verbal communication is mainly purported by a, by filmic standards, extensive use of the monologue. Apart from minor examples at the beginning and the end of the film practically all the communicative behaviour is turned into monologues, which leave virtually no room for any questions or answers. The characters' language is like a leak; once it has been opened it appears to flood almost the entirety of the respective sequence. This goes for Seelenfrieda's account of her nightmarish dream just as much as for Sister Gudrun's account of Elvira's childhood. Similarly, the life story told by Saitz's former employee, the fairy tale, which Rote Zora tells Elvira after their visit to the nunnery, or the suicidal philosopher's explorations - all these stories are conveyed as monologues. As most of the communication in the film is thus conveyed by monologues, it becomes quite clear that the general atmosphere of social alienation in the business capital brings about a substantial lack of interlocutor-related communication.

Such a use of the monologue as the predominant form of verbal communication is, in spite of, or, because of the text type's mainly lyrical character, much more opportune in the theatre than in film. Thus, Dieter Wolf's discussion of the use of monologues in film refers to the theatre as its medium of origin:

> Im Gegensatz zum Sprachdenken oder zum künstlerischen Mittel der Gedankenstimme hat eine solche Verlautbarung Offenbarungscharacter und bedarf der szenischen und situativen Rechtfertigung. Daher erklärt sich die Seltenheit von Monologen gegenüber der Theaterbühne, die ihn entdeckt hat als das Lautwerden der Gedanken einer Gestalt.[111]

However, whilst in the theatre the situational justification for the use of a monologue is normally provided by a turning point, a transitional stage, a moment of crisis or

[111] Dieter Wolf, 'Die Sprache im Film', in *Beiträge zu einer Theorie der Film- und Fernsehkunst* ed. by Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen Potsdam (Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1987), pp. 174-200 (p. 191).

decision-making - and, of course, solitude if not loneliness - in *In a Year with 13 Moons* the monologues' situational justification is provided by Elvira's search for her identity and past on the one hand and the atmosphere of social alienation in the city on the other. As it is thus a continuous state of loneliness and crisis of 'outsiders in a society which seems to have no centre'[112] which provides the basis for the application of monologues, the theatrical device makes Elvira's isolation appear rather representative than extraordinary.

As Elvira is, due to her being subjected to the other characters' monologues, practically deprived of her voice, Fassbinder nonetheless makes sure that she is given the possibility to articulate herself. However, the return of her voice comes at a price: having been expelled from the realm of diegetic sound, Elvira's voice is, except for minor contributions, only heard off-screen.[113] As her voice is thus radically separated from her body, both the extended monologues which Elvira gives in the fourth and across the final sequences of the film are no longer accompanied by the image of her character, but by the sight of death. In the fourth sequence, the image of death is provided by cattle being slaughtered at the abattoir and at the end of the film it is the image of her own death. Thus, rather than the other way round, these images appear to comment upon the assembled text: although in both cases non-diegetic sound emerges from some concrete diegetic situation, Elvira's voice indeed appears to come from the 'beyond'. Besides, the implementation of sound montage in order to be commented upon by the images also applies to the use of music: when Bryan Ferry sings 'There's no tomorrow, no today for us / Nothing is there for us to share,' in the film's seventh sequence, Elvira sits crying in one of the video arcade's corners.

By taking recourse to the artistic strategy of sound montage in his 1978 film, Fassbinder clearly puts himself in the tradition of the European avant-garde. For it was avant-gardist artists like Sergei Eisenstein and Walter Ruttmann[114] who first

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[112] Elsaesser, *Fassbinder's Germany*, p. 201.

[113] Apart from minor examples of sound montage in early films such as *Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?*, it is in *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, a film which was made just a few months before *In a Year with 13 Moons*, that the director first made use of sound montage on a large scale. In this film, however, sound montage is not primarily aimed at an externalisation of melodramatic conflict, but at the introduction of a multitude of historical voices, which are designed to contextualise Maria's actions.

[114] Cf. Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudivkin, Grigori Alexandrov, 'Statement on Sound', in S. M. Eisenstein, *Selected Works*, ed. by Richard Taylor (London, Bloomington, Indianapolis: British Film

developed the idea of sound montage and who inspired artists like Antonin Artaud to follow a similar line.[115] However, although it is true that the idea of sound montage is as old as sound film itself, it fell into oblivion until after the war when a medium was born whose prime means of conveyance is sound: television.[116] Only then Italian neo-realist, French and German new wave filmmakers such as Michelangelo Antonioni, Jean-Luc Godard and Alexander Kluge rediscovered it and used it for their own purposes.[117] Thus, when Fassbinder makes use of sound montage in a way which even prompts Robert Burgoyne, who regards the 1978 film as 'more a classical than an avant-garde text',[118] to admit that this is 'the place where the mimetic codes of realism break down',[119] then this appears to be due to the inspiration which the filmmaker draws from television's forms of representation:

> In Wechselwirkung mit den verschiedenen, sich durch das Fernsehen rasch verbreitenden journalistischen Methoden zur Erzielung authentischer Verbalaussagen entstand [im Film - K.U.M.] eine Vielzahl von Bild-Ton-Beziehungen.[120]

However, while television's predominantly journalistic purposes, which Peter Rabenalt refers to here, bring about a form of sound montage in which sound usually comments upon the images, Fassbinder's way of integrating it into the melodramatic framework of his film inverts it. For as the distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic sound marks the point of crystallisation where the polarisation between

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Institute and Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 113-114; also: Walter Ruttmann, 'Sound Films?-!', in *The German Avant-Garde Film of the 1920's*, ed. by Goethe-Institut (München: Goethe-Institut, 1989), pp. 116-119.

[115] Drawing on Sergej Eisenstein's idea of a *Montage of Attractions*, Antonin Artaud turned the idea of aesthetic discords into a cornerstone of his conception of the theatre. That this also applies to his idea of the application of sound in the theatre can be seen from his *Second Manifesto of the Theatre of Cruelty*. Here he demands that artistic means 'consisting of different intensities of colour, light or sound, using vibrations and tremors, musical, rhythmic repetition or the repetition of spoken phrases, bringing tonality or a general diffusion of light into play, can only achieve their full effect by using *discords*. [my italics - K.U.M.] - Antonin Artaud, *Collected Works*, transl. by Victor Corti, 4 vols (London: Calder & Boyars, 1968), I, p. 179.

[116] David Russell, 'A World in Inaction', *Sight and Sound*, 3 (1990), 174-179, (p. 176).

[117] Cf. e.g. Edgar Reitz, Alexander Kluge, Wilfried Reinke 'Word and Film', *October*, 46 (1965), 83-95.

[118] Burgoyne, 'Narrative and Sexual Excess', 51-61 (p. 52).

[119] Ibid., p. 60.

[120] Peter Rabenalt, 'Die auditiven Elemente als Bestandteil des film- und fernsehkünstlerischen Abbildes', in *Beiträge zu einer Theorie der Film- und Fernsehkunst*, ed. by Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen Potsdam (Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1987), pp. 150-173 (p.164).

Elvira and the social environment of the city becomes palpable on the soundtrack, it is now the images which comment upon the off- screen sound.

As the off apparently represents the audio space to which the city consigns self-lacerating thoughts like Elvira's, this is also the space where the emotionality of the human voice can be conveyed directly. This is particularly apparent in the fourth sequence of the film in which Elvira tells Zora the story of her life as she shows her around the abattoir. For as her story culminates in the description of how she and her former life-companion Christoph, then still keen to be an actor, practised his lines together, she assumes a pitched, ecstatic voice when she declaims parts of the final monologue of Goethe's play *Torquato Tasso*. As Elvira thus slips into Christoph assuming Tasso's role at the sight of cattle being slaughtered and dismembered, her voice is so heavily inflected that it unfolds all its emotionality. The fact that the non-verbal faculties of the human voice are indeed implemented in order to convey the character's states of mind directly is supported by the film's eighth sequence, in which Seelenfrieda's account of her disturbing experiences is underlaid by a cacophony of what appears to be the voices of insanity. Apparently, Fassbinder's use of voice inflection and non-verbal sounds is geared at a direct conveyance of his character's states of mind.

Just like the extensive use of monologues, Fassbinder's use of the human voice as a means to convey human emotions directly draws on a theatrical tradition rather than a filmic one. For while in the cinema verbal behaviour is by and large marked by emotional understatement, in the theatre emotionally expressive language is more readily acceptable. Again it is in particular Antonin Artaud who, outlining his idea of 'spatial poetry', demanded the use of voice inflection as a means to bypass rationality on the stage:

> The question we are faced with is of allowing the theatre to rediscover its true language, a spatial language, a language of gestures, a language of cries and onomathopoeia, an acustic language, where all the objective elements will end up as either visual or aural signs, but which have as much intellectual weight and palpable meaning as the

language of words.[121]

By transposing this idea of an 'acustic language' into his film, Fassbinder does not aim at exposing the characters' identification with some incarnation of the other as Sandra Frieden has asserted,[122] but rather emphasises the possessive powers, which the 'other' exercises over the respective characters. As the spirit of Tasso thus enables Elvira to formulate insights which she is otherwise not able to pronounce,[123] and thereby to become the medium, the mouthpiece, for the dismembered cattle, and since the cries and screams which accompany Seelenfrieda's monologue bear witness to the haunting power of her past experiences, the transposition of the theatrical device into the medium of film facilitates the direct conveyance of the respective characters' desperate states of mind.

As the use of language in *In a Year with 13 Moons* is permeated by theatrical and televisual devices, it is again media interplay which facilitates the externalisation of the characters' internalisation of the social other. For whilst the extensive use of monologues renders the general isolation of the characters in the business capital obvious, the use of sound montage clearly conveys the fact that Elvira is excluded even from this intransitive kind of communication. The use of voice inflection also shows why: while it is already difficult enough to build up meaningful relationships in a social environment which is characterised by a predominantly solitary life style, her obsession with having been victimised dooms the remaining possibilities to do so. As these interiorised patterns are externalised by artistic devices which have been transposed from the media of theatre and television, the use of language in Fassbinder's 1978 film is in keeping with that artistic principle which has been identified as the overall artistic idea of Fassbinder's work, namely the correspondence between two structures of internalisation on the formal and thematic levels. Just as

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[121] Antonin Artaud, 'The Theatre I'm About to Set Up', in *Artaud on Theatre*, ed. by Claude Schumacher (London: Methuen, 1989), pp. 64-65 (p. 65); see also 'Mise-en-scène and Metaphysics', ibid., pp. 92-97, (p. 93).

[122] Frieden, 'In the Margins of Identity', pp. 51-58 (p. 56).

[123] Kaja Silverman delivers the best argument to refute Frieden's standpoint. Silverman describes Elvira's possession as a 'peculiar form of identification, which might be said to "ex-corporate" rather than incorporate' as it 'enables the psyche to take up residence within a different bodily terrain'. Here Fassbinder indeed makes Erwin/Elvira articulate 'a pain which is no longer his own'. - Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (London, New York: Rutledge, 1992), pp. 259/262.

Elvira's use of language betrays her social outsider position, it is informed by devices, which have been transposed from other media.

Tony Pipolo has argued that *In a Year with 13 Moons* marks 'a return to the experimental tendencies of *Katzelmacher*'.[124] Although the issue, which Fassbinder raises in his film, is in itself highly unconventional, this assessment is not unproblematic. For as Robert Burgoyne has put it, hopes for 'an extraordinary restructuring of the narrative form' are largely disappointed.[125] Instead, in order to give shape to his radical problematisation of identity, Fassbinder takes recourse to what Volker Klotz has described as the open dramatic structure. This is not only because this structure facilitates dramatic depiction as a succession of episodes,[126] but also because it allows two narrative strands, a collective and a private one, to run parallel to one another.[127] Thus, like in *Garbage, the City and Death* the open dramatic structure provides the possibility to confront two different sets of world views: the protagonist's old-fashioned, rather theatrical one and a modern, rather filmic one as epitomised by the City of Frankfurt and its foremost representative, Anton Saitz. As this structure is used to convey the social experience in a world which is dominated by the modern media, the lack of structural innovation is not really surprising because, as pointed out previously, it itself largely owes its popularity to the aesthetic influences of the modern media.

Having said this, there are still a number of arguments which support Pipolo's argument insofar as Fassbinder indeed manages to 'construct an alternative narrative form and succeeds to some extend in probing the meaning of narrative itself'.[128] This, however, is not so much due to Fassbinder's implementation of 'extensive use of camera movement and deep space' as Pipolo seems to suggest,[129] but rather because of the director's drawing on an Artaudian aesthetics of unsettlement and disturbance

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[124] Pipolo, 'Bewitched by the Holy Whore', 83-112 (p. 108).
[125] Burgoyne, 'Narrative and Sexual Excess', 51-61 (p. 51).
[126] The film's highly repetitive structure with its lack of continuity and causality refutes Thomas Elsaesser's argument that the film's story is 'relentlessly linear'. It is true that there is an Artaudian will for absolute strictness at work here, however, this should not make us overlook the film's circular movement which emerges from the implementation of what Volker Klotz has defined as the open dramatic structure. - Elsaesser, *Fassbinder's Germany*, p. 198.
[127] Volker Klotz, *Geschlossene und offene Form im Drama* (Munich: Hanser, 1968), p. 115.
[128] Pipolo, 'Bewitched by the Holy Whore', 83-112 (p. 108-109).
[129] Ibid., p. 109.

which asks for a new kind of media interplay: it rests on the unconventional implementation and combination of aesthetic devices as they had been developed previously in theatre and television. The extensive use of sound montage, his elaborate use of decor, the far-reaching lack of any continuity devices in between the various sequences, and the further development of the *antiteater*'s choreographic acting style allow Fassbinder to present a world full of meaning which, however, refuses to be a meaningful world. So, if one proceeds from Jean-Louis Baudry's argument that the cinematographic apparatus has itself an ideological effect, namely to confirm the 'transcendental subject', the notion of the continuity of the spectator's self,[130] then the aesthetics of *In a Year with 13 Moons* makes every effort to invalidate it and is, in this sense, truly avant-gardistic.

[130] Jean Louis Baudry, 'The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema', in *Film Theory and Criticism* ed. by Gerald Mast et al. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 690-707.

# Part IV

# The Aesthetics of Fassbinder's Work for Television

## IV.1

## Rainer Werner Fassbinder and the Medium of Television

Although Fassbinder had produced films for television before 1972 (e.g. *Why does Herr R. Run Amok?*, 1969; *Pioneers in Ingolstadt*, 1970) it was only in the context of the production of the television series *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* (Acht Stunden sind kein Tag, 1972) that Fassbinder began to consider the aesthetics of television and distinguish between the production of his own television series / films and his cinema films. This may be surprising because television series and television film have to comply with the same requirements as far as the composition of the image and the mode of audience address are concerned. However, Fassbinder's initial attitude towards television is marked by a considerable amount of indifference towards the mass medium's aesthetic demands. At this stage, Fassbinder was either rather bored with his television productions and delegated most of the directing work to one of his co-workers - as in the case of the production of *Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?*, which was almost exclusively directed by Michael Fengler[1] - or he made cinema films which *only* became 'television films' because of their financing. Peter Berling, for example, writes about *Rio das Mortes* (1970): 'Obgleich es ein Fernsehauftrag war, drehte Fassbinder die Geschichte wie seine bisherigen Spielfilme. Auch die Story hatte Anklänge an bereits Erprobtes'.[2]

It seems almost inevitable that this approach to television led to a number of

[1] Berling, *Die 13 Jahre des Rainer Werner Fassbinder*, pp. 79-80.
[2] Ibid., p. 82.

conflict situations. The broadcasting of *The Niklashausen Journey* (1970), for instance - a film which was financed by *Westdeutscher Rundfunk only* because the filmmaker was to be won over for the production of the series *Eight Hours Are Not a Day*[3] - had to be justified in front of representatives of employer organisations. Peter Märthesheimer, then commissioning editor at the West German broadcasting station WDR, recalls:

> In dem Film sind ja höchst 'bedenkliche' Themen angesprochen worden. Es wurden schwerverständliche lateinamerikanische Überlegungen zur Weltrevolution zitiert, und es gab das Gerücht, daß 'Niklashauser Fart' der offene Aufruf zum Klassenkampf wäre. Deswegen mußte ich mich zur Rechenschaft bei den Arbeitgebervertretern ziehen lassen. Ich wurde in ein Haus in Köln, am Rheinufer, dem Sitz der Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände, zitiert, als Vertreter der öffentlich-rechtlichen Anstalt WDR.[4]

However, the controversies, which Fassbinder unleashed with his early television films, were not only about political issues. *Wildwechsel (Jail Bait*, 1972), an adaptation of one of Franz Xaver Kroetz's folk plays, which equally appears to consider television to be a mere extension of the cinema, caused a public outcry for its sexual explicitness. As the television films produced between 1969 and 1972 thus obviously failed to take the question of media conventions into consideration, it was not until Fassbinder set out to produce his first television series that he began to take television seriously.

One reason why Fassbinder began to consider the peculiarities of television aesthetics in the context of *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* may be found in the fact that the series was not so much produced for, but rather in and by television. Thus, Fassbinder was decidedly more exposed to television's mode of production, a mode of production which differs quite considerably from independent film production in that it allows television officials to impose relatively far-reaching guidelines in order to bring the film or series to be produced in line with the general profile and objectives of the respective television station. As the *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* at the time followed up a moderate left-leaning politics, Fassbinder, whose left-wing

[3] Lorenz (ed.), *Das ganz normale Chaos*, p. 125.
[4] Ibid., p. 126.

affiliation and artistic skill had elicited the admiration of Peter Märthesheimer, appeared to be the right director for the series. Thus, although Fassbinder was later to complain about the filmmakers' dependence on television officials,[5] a very close collaboration between the filmmaker and the commissioning editor developed. This culminated in Märthesheimer's collaboration in the scripting of some of Fassbinder's most successful films such as *The Marriage of Maria Braun*.

The influence, which the commissioning editor exercised on the filmmaker's approach to televisual representation, is twofold. Firstly, representing the television station's left-wing objectives, Märthesheimer was the one who prompted Fassbinder to adopt the idea of positive identification. In fact, Fassbinder paid tribute to Märthesheimer's influence on his aesthetic development when he was asked in 1974 whether or not he found it important to give the audience a point of identification in his films:

> Ja. Draufgekommen bin ich durch Leute wie Yaak Karsunke, Peter Märthesheimer... Die haben mir nicht gesagt, mach Identifikation, sondern die haben mir gesagt, es ist wichtig, daß man die Welt verändert.[6]

Obviously, Peter Märthesheimer prompted Fassbinder to return to the rather conservative idea of identification in order to carry issues over into the lives of the viewers.[7] Having thus guided the filmmaker in an aesthetic direction, which suited the WDR's profile, Märthesheimer, secondly, also gave concrete pieces of advice as to how it could be put into practice. In fact, it was the commissioning editor who planned *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* as a family series set in the workers' milieu. Moreover, he was also the one who first conceived of the series' most important

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[5] Fassbinder complained that '[d]as Schlimme an den Drehbüchern ist der Zwang, auf die dramaturgischen Wünsche des Fernsehredakteurs oder der Gremien hin zu schreiben'. - Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 130. This complaint confirms Egon Netenjakob's view of television production as a mode of production which questions 'die alte Autorensouveränität'[.] '[D]en Autor zu manipulieren, ihn zu dem zu bringen, was er schreiben und inszenieren soll' appears to be a kind of collaboration which was familiar to Fassbinder. - Quotations in Irmela Schneider, 'Das Fernsehspiel. Wie es war, ist und sein könnte', in *Fernsehsendungen und ihre Formen. Typologie, Geschichte und Kritik des Fernsehprogramms in der BRD*, ed. by Helmut Kreuzer and Karl Prümm (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1990), pp. 26-42 (p. 32).

[6] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 62.

[7] Christian Braad Thomsen, 'Five Interviews with Fassbinder', in *Fassbinder*, ed. by Tony Rayns (London: British Film Institute, 1980), pp. 82-101 (p. 86).

character; the character of the 'Oma',[8] and finally also corrected Fassbinder's slow moving film aesthetics.[9]

The pursuit of a positive representation of everyday life, which, as the analysis of *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* has shown, also had a certain impact on the cinema films he made henceforth, is at the root of Fassbinder's first attempt at outlining an aesthetic differentiation between his work for the two media of cinema and television.

> Meine Filme und Theaterstücke sind für ein intellektuelles Publikum gemacht. Intellektuellen gegenüber kann man ruhig pessimistisch sein, denn ein Intellektueller hat die Möglichkeit, seinen Verstand einzusetzen. Bei einem so großen Publikum wie bei der Fernsehserie wäre es dagegen reaktionär, ja fast ein Verbrechen, wenn man die Welt so aussichtslos darstellen würde, denn denen muß man vor allem Mut machen und zu ihnen sagen: Für euch gibt es trotz allem Möglichkeiten.[10]

Proceeding from his viewers / spectators' presumed intellectual capacities, Fassbinder derives his own aesthetic conclusions and outlines two different kinds of audience address. The formulation may not be very fortunate insofar as it makes his 'revolutionary' ideas about positive identification appear a bit condescending. What is important, however, is that Fassbinder does not rule out the opportunities offered by the mass medium, but tries to take the conditions of television into account so as to adjust his works to the framework of the medium.

Besides the different mode of television production, the aesthetic influence of the commissioning editor and the different kind of audience address it is also the fact that *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* was the first series to be produced by Fassbinder which prompted a reconsideration of television aesthetics. For as it is in television that the series has reached an unparalleled popularity, the use of this format almost inevitably leads to a more profound understanding of television programming and the mass medium's requirements for its fictional programmes. In fact, Fassbinder only used the phrase 'television aesthetics' once, namely when he considered the peculiarities of the format of the TV series:

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[8] Lorenz (ed.), *Das ganz normale Chaos*, p. 129.
[9] Ibid., p. 128.
[10] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, 1986), p. 44.

> An important element of the TV aesthetic, in fact, is that the same programmes come back time and again: the news, the series and so on. This principle should be applied to the features and entertainment programmes you make for TV.[11]

Obviously, the engagement with the format of the series demands Fassbinder to involve himself with the medium of television on a different scale. The series has its own structure and dramaturgy, which are quite different even from what cinema and television films may have in common. The series as we know it today developed its aesthetics in close interaction with the context of television programming, a process in which also television comes back to itself.[12]

That Fassbinder was indeed able to make an important contribution to this process in which television searches for its own and most appropriate aesthetic form becomes obvious as soon as one considers the frequency with which he made use of the series format. For by producing *Eight Hours Are Not a Day,* the filmmaker not only made one of the first family series on German television altogether, but also subsequently continued to make use of series. Mini-series like *World on the Wire* (Welt am Draht, 1973), an adaptation of Daniel F. Galouye's novel, his adaptation of Oskar Maria Graf's 1931 novel *Bolwieser*, *The Stationmaster's Wife* (*Bolwieser*, 1977), as well as the enormous undertaking of adapting Alfred Döblin's novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980) as a series in 13 parts and an epilogue, readily show the significance of Fassbinder's use of the series for the medium's aesthetic development at the time. That the filmmaker indeed associated the format of the series with the aesthetics of television is underscored by the fact that he only resumed his reflections on the electronic medium when he set out to produce his second major series, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, in 1979. Then, however, his statements were somewhat more

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[11] Thomsen, 'Five Interviews with Fassbinder', pp. 82-101 (p. 86).

[12] Werner Faulstich has pointed out that there is a close connection between the medium of television and the series. 'Episoden-Serien ... gab es schon lange vorm Fernsehen. Aber die Serie als dramatische Form "ist in ihrer gesamten Genre- und Materialvielfalt zum Fernsehen übergelaufen; sie hat sich inzwischen zu einer dem Fernsehen gemäßen Kunstform entwickelt" (Hoff 1976). [...] Für das Fernsehen ist besonders charakteristisch, daß sich die Behandlung eines Werkes als einzelnes völlig verbietet; im Fernsehen gibt es nicht das Individuelle, sondern nur das vom medialen Kontext Geprägte.' - Werner Faulstich, *Ästhetik des Fernsehens: Eine Fallstudie zum Dokumentarspiel 'Die Nacht, in der die Marsmenschen Amerika angriffen' (1976) von Joseph Sargent* (Tübingen: Narr, 1982), pp. 127/128.

differentiated than before, in 1972.

The starting point of Fassbinder's reflections on television aesthetics in 1979/80 is provided by the social functions, which he ascribes to the media of cinema and television. Whilst television's selection of subjects is determined by its entertainment function, the cinema is there to provide the audience with new experiences.[13] As he thus develops a division of labour for the two media on the basis of audiences expectancies, Fassbinder overcomes his earlier differentiation of institutional audiences by replacing the rather rigid idea of different audiences, who are determined by their intellectual capacities, by a more dynamic differentiation, which may depend on situational factors. This reconsideration of the audiences' frame of mind has repercussions on Fassbinder's own aesthetic differentiation between his works for the two different media. Whereas the aesthetic differentiation between cinema and television in 1972 was defined along the line of the opposition between 'atmosphere' and 'directness', by 1980 he replaced it by a more radical conceptual opposition. Now it is the opposition between 'shock' and 'consensus' which marks the differentiation between cinema and television aesthetics in Fassbinder's work.

However, just as Fassbinder's 1972 outline of the aesthetic difference between the media left enough room for their interplay, the new approach does not curtail this space for manoeuvring and artistic innovation either. Fassbinder had no intention of excluding those possibilities from his artistic practice, which the aesthetic interplay between the various media provides. However, there is a clear shift in emphasis as to the direction of the exchange of aesthetic means between cinema and television. Whilst in 1972/73 Fassbinder put the emphasis on the transposition of artistic strategies and devices from television into film, by 1979/80 this interrelation between the two media was inverted and the emphasis was now put on the transposition of artistic means from the cinema into television. Television is no longer deemed to be in the 'lead', the medium from which film can draw aesthetic inspiration, but vice versa: it is now the film aesthetics which the director himself developed in his work for the cinema that is to leave its mark on his television

[13] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 154.

output.[14]

Since Fassbinder contemplated televisual forms of representation predominantly in the context of the production of his two major television series, it seems likely that it is above all here that we will find indices as to his aesthetic approach to television. Moreover, as there is a clear shift in Fassbinder's aesthetic orientation between 1972 and 1980, a comparison of the two series will also give an idea of Fassbinder's aesthetic development in the medium of television. When I will therefore embark upon the analysis of Fassbinder's two major television series it can be expected that the aesthetics of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* are more 'filmic' and therefore more radical in a televisual context than the rendition of *Eight Hours Are Not a Day*, which is likely to be more in line with televisual forms of representation and therefore aesthetically more moderate. In any case, however, and be it only for the adoption of the format of the series, the aesthetic consideration of the two series will make it quite clear that both works are notably different from the director's work for the cinema.

[14] For all the relevant quotations on the topic of Fassbinder's changing view of the aesthetic relationship between cinema and television in his own work please see section I.2.2.

## IV.2

## *Acht Stunden sind kein Tag* - Fassbinder's Adoption of Television Aesthetics

### IV.2.1 Fassbinder's First Series in the Context of German Television

Within the scope of German television, Fassbinder's series *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* is an outstanding piece of work. This is not only due to the fact that it was produced by a filmmaker who by then had already established his reputation as one of West Germany's foremost artists in the field of the audio-visual arts, but also because it was conceived of as an original piece of work in the format of the series. For as Knut Hickethier has pointed out, the family series and the serial form in general were not as easily accepted on German television as they were elsewhere.[15] On the whole, German television, more than television in other European countries, understood itself as the guardian of traditional high culture, a fact for which the above-average frequency of one-part literature adaptations in the 1950s and 60s is indicative.[16] It was only in 1959 that the first series, the six-part *Durbridge* detective story, appeared on German television screens.[17] Among the *family* series, only the *Hesselbachs* is known to have had a major impact on the aesthetic development of the genre before Fassbinder produced *Eight Hours Are Not a Day.*[18] Thus, although

[15] Hickethier, *Fernsehspiel der Bundesrepublik*, p. 71.
[16] Ibid., p. 82 ff.
[17] Ibid., p. 71.
[18] Herbert Spaich, *Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Leben und Werk* (Weinheim: Belz, 1992), p. 50.

the main parameters for the series were actually given, Fassbinder's advance into the field of the television family series represents an important step in the development of German television.

However, it is not only the fact that Fassbinder's series was one of the first family series on German television altogether which makes *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* an outstanding piece of work. Also the fact that this project was realised in the shape of an unprecedented marriage of the family series and the worker's film, contributes to its uniqueness. By the time Fassbinder began his work on the series the genre of the worker's film had already been quite successful. It emerged in the form of documentaries like Erika Runge's films *Why Is Frau B. Happy?* (Warum ist Frau B. glücklich?, 1968) and *My Name Is Erwin and I'm 17 Years* (Ich heiße Erwin und bin 17 Jahre, 1970). Subsequently, as examples like Theo Gallehr's and Rolf Schübel's *Red Flags Can Be Seen Better* (Rote Fahnen sieht man besser, 1971) show, the documentaries about the workers' milieu took on an increasingly narrative form and gradually extended to the length of a feature film. Thus, by 1972 the genre of the workers' film had reached the point at which it was largely dominated by fictional narration. Ingo Kratisch's and Marianne Lüdcke's *Wages and Love* (Lohn und Liebe, 1973), Christian Ziewer's and Klaus Wiese's *Snowdrops Bloom in September* (Schneeglöckchen blühen im September, 1974) as well as Ziewer's masterpiece *Walking Tall* (Der aufrechte Gang, 1976) are cases in point for this tendency in the development of the workers' film. It is this gradual fictionalisation of the genre which provides the background for the production of Fassbinder's first series.

In many ways Fassbinder appears to have been the right choice for the production of a family series set in a working class milieu. Firstly, Fassbinder's fascination with the folk play provides a starting point from where it is only one step towards the production of a worker's film. In fact, Märthesheimer's admiration for the early film *Katzelmacher* appears to have been the main reason why Fassbinder was commissioned for the production of the series.[19] Just like the folk play, the worker's genre provides the possibility to explore human relationships among

[19] Lorenz (ed.), *Das ganz normale Chaos*, p. 125.

representatives of the lower social classes in the context of their economic conditions. Moreover, since Fassbinder had turned towards a more melodramatic mode of representation by 1972, his aesthetic reorientation gave his films an aesthetic twist which brought it even more in line with what is characteristic of televisual representation. For according to David Russell the melodramatic mode of representation is one of the hallmarks of fictional television programmes.[20] On this basis Fassbinder developed an aesthetic approach whose similarity to television aesthetics has been pointed out by Pipolo. '[S]mall-scale intimacy, the addressing of a given problem, the confined scope of the drama, the accent on domestic and workplace relationships, the repetition of character types and familiar faces' are all aesthetic features which may have recommended the filmmaker for the production of a family series in the workers' milieu.

*Eight Hours Are Not a Day* was first transmitted between October 29, 1972 and March 18, 1973. With ratings of 41 to 45 percent of the West German television audience the series 'captured the largest audience share of any *Arbeiterfilm*'.[21] Moreover, 60 percent of those who saw the series assessed it as 'good' or 'very good'.[22] However, whilst the series was received very well by the audience, the critics were not as easily convinced. The main points of their criticism concerned the series' rather anarchistic outlook on life, which was perceived as naiveté, and its lack of realism.[23] The critical voices were later joined by the governing board (*Rundfunkrat*) of the WDR when the majority of the board argued that

> the dramaturgy of the series failed to follow in documentary detail the highly organised and articulated series of procedures that would have to be gone through in a realistic working situation before an industrial grievance could be articulated in industrial action.[24]

Apparently, the initiators and/or supporters of the *Arbeiterfilm* struggled with the genre's aesthetic development. Although the fact that the subject-matter's political

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[20] Russell, 'A World in Inaction', 174-179 (p. 176).
[21] Richard Collins, Vincent Porter, *WDR and the Arbeiterfilm: Fassbinder, Ziewer and others* (London: British Film Institute, 1981), p. 111.
[22] Ibid., p. 108.
[23] Roth, 'Kommentierte Filmographie', pp. 119-269 (pp. 160/161).
[24] Collins and Porter, *WDR and the Arbeiterfilm*, p. 109.

and economic dimension is largely reduced to the level of character interaction is in line with the gradual fictionalisation of the *Arbeiterfilm* genre, it was still required to be of 'documentary' realism.

Even though the series' first five episodes had thus already been the subject of criticism, the fact that *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* was discontinued thereafter was not due to a lack of realism. What was really considered intolerable was the fact that the projected parts 6-8 abandon the dramaturgy of parts 1-5, and run along a different dramaturgical line. As Fassbinder's statement about the discontinuation of the series shows, these three episodes would have been considerably less 'positive' than the previous five and thus more in line with his cinema films:

> Was heißt 'dramaturgische Gründe'? Man kann es auch an dramaturgischen Gründen aufhängen, wenn man Lust hat. Es gibt so Sachen: die Monika hätte sich umgebracht, und das Verhältnis von dem Jochen und der Marion wäre auf eine Art problematisiert worden die der Rohrbach nicht mehr wollte, der Rohrbach hatte die Vorstellung 'dieses Traumpaar'. Das wäre aber eine Ehe mit großen Schwierigkeiten geworden. [...] Dann waren da noch so ganz konkrete Dinge: was die Haltung zu diesen Arbeiterorganisationen betrifft, die es gibt, zu Betriebsräten und Gewerkschaften, da sind wir etwas krasser noch als die DKP und etwas menschlicher als jedwede Systeme geworden. [...] [25]

So, when the 'naive' personalisation of complicated social mechanisms already provoked criticism not only from the critics but also from employers and trade unions alike,[26] then Fassbinder's attempted return to the 'negative' aesthetics which is more typical of the cinema films he had made previously was not likely to prompt Günther Rohrbach and the governing board of the WDR to change their minds and give green light for the production of the remaining three episodes. '[T]he project embodied in these three unshot episodes', Collins and Porter argue convincingly, 'would have fundamentally challenged the ideological framework overarching the first five.'[27] Television may allow for the conveyance of 'revolutionary' messages on the level of content; a structural challenge to television dramaturgy, however, appears

[25] Quotation from: Roth, 'Kommentierte Filmographie', pp. 119-269 (pp. 161/162).
[26] Collins and Porter, *WDR and the Arbeiterfilm*, p. 109.
[27] Ibid., p. 58.

to be quite unacceptable.[28]

## IV.2.2 *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* - Structural Features of an Exercise in Being 'Positive'

Proceeding from what the television officials of the WDR projected as the series' topic *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* explores the different ways in which a working class family manage their everyday lives. In doing so the series' scope is confined to one basic dilemma, namely how to live under conditions which are characterised by restricted political influence and economic dependence. Such a dramaturgy in which forward movement is largely replaced by the exploration of one basic issue or problem finds itself in fundamental accordance with serial dramaturgy. For as the persistent recurrence of the same basic problematic provides the starting point for all the dramatic conflicts dealt with, it guarantees the series' continuation over several parts. John Ellis has therefore termed it its 'groundbase':

> This form of repetition is different from that offered by the classic cinema narrative, as it provides a kind of groundbase, a constant basis for events, rather than an economy of reuse directed towards a final totalisation.[29]

By making use of such a groundbase in his series, Fassbinder ensures that the basic situation is neither exceeded nor abandoned. Unlike the cinema, 'the soaps aren't a relief from domestic routine which oppresses their viewers, but a confirmation of it'.[30] Consequently, the use of serial dramaturgy puts the emphasis on the coping with the social conditions, not on their being questioned or overthrown.

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[28] For a comprehensive discussion of the reception and the discussions surrounding the first screening of *Eight Hours Are not a Day* and the changing attitude towards its aesthetics over the following years, see Bernhard Schäfer, 'Kitisieren - Absetzen – Kanonisieren. Wertungshandeln am Beispiel von Fassbinders *Acht Stunden sind kein Tag*', in *Europäische Kinokunst im Zeitalter des Fernsehens*, ed. by Volker Roloff, Helmut Schanze and Dietrich Scheunemann (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1998)

[29] Ellis, *Visible Fictions*, p. 147.

[30] Peter Conrad, *Television: The Medium and its Manners* (Boston, London: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 35.

However, although the fundamental working and living conditions of their lives are thus firmly established, the characters are never caught up by their underprivileged situation. As the characters who constitute or are associated with Fassbinder's working class family neither accept the conditions of their lives as they are nor try to leave their habitual social environment, they are, unlike most of Fassbinder's own cinema characters, never passive and rarely victims. Instead, very much in line with the slogan of 'together we are strong', the director puts the emphasis on how members of the working class use the potential of their situation rather than merely cope with it: social reality is recognised by the members of the working class family and the characters who are associated with them as something which can be moulded by their own hands. Driven by the spirit of solidarity and the wish for self-determination, especially Oma (Luise Ullrich) and her grandson Jochen (Gottfried John) put forward one suggestion for the improvement of their working and living conditions after the other. Thus, as the working class characters in the series use the potential which their secure subject position offers to them, they are able to become the agents in the process of their own emancipation.

While the characters' aspiration to use the potential of their situation thus undermines the essentially static dramaturgy of the series, the sense of solidarity among the characters brings out the stasis of their working class situation. For although the series is packed with didactic suggestions as to how people from the lower ranks of society can take control of their lives and mould reality with their own hands as the spirit of solidarity and self-determination indeed guides the actions of most of the family's members, Fassbinder does not create a collective protagonist who would be able to change the situation in its entirety. Instead, as the characters are given the possibility to realise it in their own, individual ways, the working class family are fighting sideways as it were, each member in a different direction, constantly trying to push back the limits of their lives without calling them into question. The issue of social emancipation thus being raised without pushing it to the last consequence, it becomes an integral part of the dramaturgical groundbase itself. Just as the groundbase limits the characters' radius of action, it also provides the means by which the restriction can be mastered.

In order to give the rather dialectical situation of the working class characters an appropriate structure, Fassbinder combines the typical structure of a family soap opera with structural elements from his cinema films. As *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* is composed of a number of narrative strands which are attached to those couples and collectives which constitute the (extended) working class family, it makes use of a narrative structure which Werner Faulstich has pointed out as typical of serial dramaturgy: the 'parallel structure'.[31] However, as these narrative strands not only run alongside each other throughout the entire series, but also constantly intercut each other, they not only open up a simultaneous view of different social spheres,[32] but also form 'relatively discrete segments'[33] which allow the action to be portioned as a 'series of clinches'.[34] These clinches, or rather melodramatic mini-conflicts, allow another pattern to emerge from across the individual segments: while the solidarity and will for self-determination makes the members of the extended family provide positive role models, the resistance on the part of the representatives of political, economic or patriarchal power is clearly shown to be on the negative side. As the series is thus put within the scope of the value-judgements of right and wrong, the entire series is put into the moral framework of melodrama.[35] However, although the filmmaker's fascination with the Hollywood melodrama has evidently left its trace here, its pattern is inverted for the application in the television series: unlike in conventional melodrama it appears to be the underdogs who are usually in control of the situation, displaying their (moral) superiority. On this basis Fassbinder shifts the attribute of acuteness from one strand to the other, creating a continuous flow of luck and trouble, worries and happiness. Consequently, the structure of Fassbinder's first series combines elements from melodrama with those of television aesthetics.

Part one of the series mainly focuses on the emerging relationship between

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[31] Faulstich, *Ästhetik des Fernsehens*, p. 83.

[32] The series' composition of different narrative strands enables it to combine social scope and personal viewpoints and hence identification and the plurality of standpoints. In this, Fassbinder's *Eight Hours Are not a Day* is fundamentally in line with television's status as mass medium in which '[p]luralistic balance is seen as a virtue'. - Wilson, *Watching Television*, p. 163.

[33] That this segmented structure is characteristic of television in general has been argued by John Ellis: Ellis, *Visible Fictions*, p. 112.

[34] Ibid., p. 152.

[35] Cf. Manuel Alvarado, 'Eight Hours Are Not A Day', in *Fassbinder*, ed. by Tony Rayns (London, BFI, 1980), pp. 70-78 (p. 73).

Oma's grandson Jochen and Marion and is therefore entitled *Jochen and Marion*. As Oma celebrates her 60th birthday with her family, Jochen leaves to get some Champaign from a nearby machine on the street. Here he meets Marion (Hanna Schygulla) and takes her back to Oma's birthday party. It is from here that the action ramifies into different strands of action. While Jochen introduces the viewer to his co-workers at the factory as they are promised an efficiency bonus, Marion has to stand up for her new relationship and fight against the classy prejudices of her colleague Irmgard (Irm Hermann). Meanwhile Oma meets Gregor (Werner Fink) in a park whereupon she decides to move out of the apartment which belongs to Jochen's parents Käthe (Anita Bucher) and Wolf (Wolfried Lier). In the factory, the efficiency bonus has been cancelled as Jochen's suggestion for the acceleration of the production process made any extra work superfluous. In order to force the governing board to pay it anyway, the workers decide to sabotage the production process. However, while the workers are successful in their attempt to get their due payment, Meister Kretzschmer (Victor Curland), who got in between the frontlines in this conflict, surprisingly dies towards the end of the episode.

As the following part of series concentrates mainly on the elderly couple of Oma and Gregor, this episode bears the title of *Oma and Gregor*. Since Oma has decided to move out of Käthe's and Wolf's apartment, the elderly couple look for a flat in order to move together. In the course of their search Oma not only suggests the foundation of an association for the abolition of public tariffs, but also the setting-up of an agency for the procurement of flats especially for elderly people. Subsequently, Jochen's sister Monika (Renate Roland), who is constantly being patronised by her husband Harald (Kurt Raab), announces her wish to resume her professional life at a family meeting. As Oma and Gregor continue their search, it is shown how children, who have been playing in the street, are wedged in by cars coming from all directions. Thus another plan is eventually realised: Oma sets up a kindergarten in the empty rooms of the former municipal library. This plan is not only supported by the local housewives, but also by Jochen and his colleagues who help her renovate the rooms. Yet, as the kindergarten lacks a licence, the police close it down until a children's demonstration in the building of the municipal administration effects its

reopening. This victory encourages Franz Miltenberger (Wolfgang Schenck), one of Jochen's co-workers, to apply for the vacant post of the foreman.

Episode three of the series concentrates on the appointment of a new foreman at the factory and is therefore entitled by the names of the two applicants, *Franz and Ernst*. In a pub, Jochen and his co-workers discuss the appointment of a new foreman. As Jochen has dinner at his parent's apartment, he finds the flat is rather quiet because of Oma's absence and leaves to spend the evening with Marion. At the factory the workers let it be known that they would like Franz to be their new foreman. Meanwhile Jochen's sister Monika, who is increasingly depressed about her marriage, begins to have affairs with other men. Back at the factory Franz seems to have forgone his chances for the post of the foreman as he failed to meet the standard in a crucial situation. As the new foreman Ernst (Peter Gauhe) arrives, the workers decide to ignore him, although he makes a genuine effort to gain their trust when Rüdiger (Herb Andress) reports on the guest-worker Guiseppe (Grigorios Karipidis). However, as Ernst himself confesses that he would prefer to work in a different place within the factory, he no longer obstructs Franz's application. Instead, he helps Franz with the preparations for the trade examination. As Franz passes the exam successfully, Werkshallenleiter Gross (Rainer Hauer) promises to support his application.

The series' fourth part takes the deteriorating marriage of Jochen's sister as its focal point and therefore bears the title of *Harald and Monika*. After Jochen and Marion have spent a night together Marion's mother (Brigitte Mira) forces Jochen out of the apartment as she realises that he is 'just' a worker. After a short visit to his parents and his grandmother, Jochen goes to an amusements centre where he is the only single person among many couples. While Jochen subsequently proposes to Marion in a restaurant, Harald and Monika have a long discussion about their ideas of happiness and Monika's wish to resume her professional life. Against the background of their wrecked marriage both Marion's as well as Jochen's colleagues advice not to get married appears plausible. Yet, while Harald accepts Monika's wish to be divorced, Jochen and Marion decide to arrange everything for their wedding. After both couples falter once more in the following, Marion and Jochen get married.

At the wedding party, which takes up a large part of the episode, Harald finally agrees to the divorce. The wedding party is also the occasion at which Irmgard drops her prejudices against workers and enjoys a kiss by Rolf (Rudolf Waldemar Brem).

As the title of the final part of the series is *Irmgard and Rolf*, it directs the viewer's attention at this emerging relationship. First, however, it is another issue that covers the foreground: Jochen's employer plans to move the factory to another part of Cologne, a plan which has repercussions on all the workers' lives. Hence Jochen plans to exchange flats with his parents, an idea which initially meets his father's resistance. Back at work, the workers pronounce the wish to determine the rhythm of the production process themselves, an idea which is rejected by Werkshallenleiter Gross, but welcomed by the firm's director, who admits that he does so only for his own advantage. Irmgard and Rolf start a relationship and Monika, who has left her estranged husband Harald, moves back in with her parents. However, as she has entrusted her savings to a dubious businessman, who promises incredible profits, Oma sees the necessity to intervene and save Monika's money. Irmgard and Rolf move to Marion's and Jochen's apartment, while Oma and Gregor create the conditions for Monika and Manfred (Wolfgang Zerlett) to confess their love to one another.

As this structure thus combines the episodic characteristics of serial dramaturgy with a polarisation among the characters as it is typical of cinema melodrama, it is by means of media interplay that Fassbinder externalises the character's interiorisation of the social other. For as the intercutting of the various narrative strands enables the series to combine a melodramatic perspective with social breadth, the individual segments of the narrative flow give the characters the possibility to practice the role models which they have interiorised as a result of working class life: solidarity and the struggle for self-determination. As the underlying issue of all the conflicts in the series is thus emancipation, the successful combination of the worker's film and the family series is mainly due to the transposition of an artistic strategy, which the director first introduced into his work for the cinema. The inverted melodramatic perspective enables Fassbinder to show self-determination being actually put into practice. In this rather didactic way *Eight*

*Hours Are Not a Day* does indeed offer some 'cinematic relief' from everyday reality. However, since the genre's inherent confirmation of everyday life is not annulled, but turned it into the affirmation of a positive everyday reality, the series' positive outlook on life is twofold: it 'create[s] positive images to demonstrate the possibility of living within those conditions and, more importantly, of changing them.'[36] As *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* thus conveys an affirmation of change on the basis of a general affirmation of (working class) life, Fassbinder's use of media interplay enables the genre of the family series to go beyond itself.

### IV.2.3 Taking Action in Television: The Goal-Orientation of Character Types

Character interaction in *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* is based on the repeated use of similar patterns of behaviour. This repetitiveness establishes all the characters in the series as character types. Frequent outbursts of anger characterise Jochen's father Wolf as the choleric type; Käthe would be the patient and understanding wife who, however, cannot be intimidated. Monika is the quiet and shy girl who finds it difficult to assert herself against her moody and patronising husband Harald, whilst Jochen is the good-natured and assertive type with a social talent. This kind of typification forestalls any kind of personal development. There is no acquisition or accumulation of knowledge; whatever skills the characters may have, they have them right from the beginning. This puts Fassbinder's characters in line with what is true of soap opera characters in general: they do not 'learn',[37] or as Faulstich has put it in his book *Ästhetik des Fernsehens*: 'Personen werden in der Serie nicht differenziert, auch wenn sie immer wieder auftreten, sondern nur vertrauter; sie sind stehend'.[38] It is by these typified patterns of behaviour rather than a complex psychology that the viewer recognises the various characters in the series.[39]

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[36] Ibid., p. 71.
[37] Ellis, *Visible Fictions*, p. 156.
[38] Faulstich, *Ästhetik des Fernsehens*, p. 129.
[39] Wilhelm Roth interprets these character types in terms of a stylisation 'nach dem Schema des Volkstheaters'. Apparently, the use of character types in the series constitutes an intersection point

However, although the constitution of the characters is essentially static, they constantly strive for emancipation and happiness. In *Eight Hours Are Not a Day*, the determination to assert oneself has a name: Oma.[40] In the first two parts alone, Oma puts forward three ideas designed to improve everyday life: she suggests the foundation of an association for the abolition of public tariffs, an agency for the procurement of flats especially for elderly people and the setting-up of a kindergarten. Such an amount of positive energy gives Oma a great deal of influence over the other characters. Grandson Jochen clearly walks in her footsteps when he, still in episode one, makes a certain suggestion for the acceleration of the production process at the factory. Oma's energy even has repercussions on Jochen's colleague Franz because her successful struggle for the establishment of the kindergarten encourages him to apply for the post of the foreman. Consequently, in spite of the fact that the characters' personalities never change, they are marked by a kind of goal-orientation which is more commonly encountered in cinema films rather than in the average television series.

While the working class characters' goal-orientation undermines the static constitution of their personalities, their wish for self-determination brings out the typification of their personalities. Due to the emancipatory impulse the various characters assume a fixed position within the melodramatic framework of good and bad. These poles are largely epitomised by two of the permanent characters in the series: the energetic and warm-hearted Oma appears to be the series' positive pole, whilst Jochen's boss at the factory, the potentially exploiting and easily cornered Werkshallenleiter Gross, would be its negative one. This polarisation, which reflects the marriage of family series and worker's film, is certainly not as apparent as in Fassbinder's cinema melodramas. For as all the remaining characters occupy the space in between, with Jochen, Franz, Käthe clustering around the positive pole and Jochen's brother-in-law Harald, the municipal authorities and Jochen's colleague

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between Fassbinder's earlier work for theatre and cinema and his first television series. - Roth, 'Kommentierte Filmographie', pp. 119-269 (p. 159).

[40] Oma's assertiveness places her at the centre of the series' dramaturgy. Although Collins and Porter have argued that '[t]he figures of Jochen and Marion ... are the foci around which the other characters cohere', this appears debatable as it is Oma from whom all the 'goodness' in the series emanates and who integrates everybody else. Her influence permeates all the narrative strands of the series. - Collins and Porter, *WDR and the Arbeiterfilm*, p. 58.

Rüdiger (Herb Andress) clustering around the negative one, the genre's social breadth tends to mitigate the antagonisms between the characters. Notwithstanding this restriction, it is the working class characters' goal-orientation that facilitates the typification of all the characters in Fassbinder's first series.

Artistically, Fassbinder renders the characters' typification within the melodramatic framework by means of an acting style, which is based on the *antiteater*'s artistic practice. However, while the choreographic acting style of the theatre performances and cinema films of the time is marked by slow movement and the spatial separation of the characters, Fassbinder, in order to adopt it for his television series, smoothes and accelerates its movement. There is no fundamental discrepancy between the characters' behaviour and the spaces they move in; the principle of assertiveness governs all character interaction in the series, regardless of whether they are at home or at work. As the characters are thus very much in control of their social sphere, they also command the time that is at their disposal. There is no sense of being deprived of one's own lifetime, as it is typical of the early film *Katzelmacher*; instead, it is not only made use of very effectively, but also enjoyed for one's own gain. For as the title of the series indicates, life not only consists of work but also of a fulfilled private life. As this acting style is largely derived from elements that are reminiscent of the *antiteater*'s acting style, media interplay clearly provides its basis.

The attitude of assertiveness, by means of which Fassbinder's characters take control of their social sphere, is rendered primarily by the ability to take action and address any arising issues directly. No matter if it is about the payment of an efficiency bonus, the appointment of a new foreman or the self-determination of the work rhythm, Jochen and his colleagues are never shy to give voice to their concerns. As this is usually done in a skilful and diplomatic way, their efforts are not only successful, but also freed of its humiliating implications: 'die Schadenfreude über negative Figuren [fehlt weitgehend]'.[41] Similarly, all the problems, which arise from the character's private lives, are dealt with in a direct and respectful way. Misunderstandings like Jochen's assumption that Marion has a child are sorted out

[41] Roth, 'Kommentierte Filmographie', pp. 119-269 (pp. 159).

by giving the benefit of the doubt, Monika receives the support of her family as she seeks to assert herself against and finally break up with her husband, and as Marion's mother objects to her daughter's relationship with a worker, Jochen convinces her of his polite manners when he gives her flowers. On the basis of such an ability to take action and assert themselves, the characters are able to make the space in which they live their own; feelings of estrangement from their social environment can be overcome and are therefore no more than temporary.

This ability of the characters to take action and assert themselves is rather unusual for television characters. For as David Russell has pointed out, television drama and soap operas present a 'world in inaction' rather than a world in action.[42] By contrast, it is the medium of cinema whose representations put more emphasis on action being taken. For as cinematic narration is usually based on the representation of a character's struggles to depart from one situation and arrive at another one, taking action and asserting oneself is crucial for the plot development of most cinema films. However, in order to carry the more action-oriented kind of acting into the medium of television, Fassbinder modifies it in two ways. On the one hand he not only scales it down from the emotional intensity needed for the great achievements usually reached out for in cinematic narration to the rather mellow emotionality of everyday life, but also replaces the flexibility of cinema characters by a mere variation of the same basic pattern of assertiveness. On the basis of these modifications of action-oriented acting Fassbinder is able to carry an acting style typical for cinematic narration into television and thus give his first series a rather cinematic air.

As the general attitude of assertiveness thus allows the characters to feel at home in their own social sphere, their relationship to time is relaxed and marked by an effortless enjoyment of the present. The general zest of life among the characters is primarily conveyed by the far-reaching playfulness of the acting. Just as the fact that the workers occasionally tease each other in the workplace raises the representation of the probably rather monotonous work to the level of amusing entertainment, the rather overacted demeanour of characters like Jochen's hot

[42] Russell, 'A World in Inaction', 174-179 (p. 174).

tempered but good-natured father Wolf, which is capable of keeping the camera very busy tracing his steps, enlivens family life considerably. However, it is above all the lightness of being conveyed by the warm-hearted Oma, who is always in a good mood, which carries the acting's emphasis on the enjoyment of everyday life. No matter what kind of difficulties she encounters, Oma always finds a solution and is never thrown off her balance. Although no less theatrical, such emphasis on playfulness and zest of life accelerates the acting considerably and therefore finds itself in stark contrast to the long-windedness typical of the cinema films Fassbinder made at the time.

In contrast to the characters' ability to take action, the acting's emphasis on zest of life and playfulness is clearly more on the televisual side. For it is television which, on the basis on its emphasis on balanced and harmonious representation, seeks to accompany the lives of its viewers by a flow of easygoing images of everyday life. In particular situation comedy and game shows, two genuine television genres, provide the pattern for much of the humorous acting in the series.[43] Occasionally, the comedy-like plot elements take the shape of concrete intertextuality, for instance when Jochen and Marion imitate Robert Lembke's television game show *Was bin ich?* in part one. Thus, the emphasis on zest of life and playfulness gives the temporal dimension of the acting in the series a fluidity which appears to be very much in line with what Raynold Williams has pointed out as typical of the temporal structure of television programming in general. For in his book *Television, Technology and Cultural Form* Williams raises the 'planned flow' of programmes and images to the level of a 'defining characteristic of broadcasting, simultaneously as a technology and as a cultural form'.[44]

As the *antiteater*-based acting style thus achieves filmic and televisual effects, it is by means of media interplay that Fassbinder externalises the characters' internalisation of socially provided patterns of behaviour. For while the characters' ability to take action and determine the circumstances of their own lives conveys the assertiveness of class-conscious workers, the emphasis on playfulness shows that they are fundamentally at ease with themselves. As it is therefore a combination of

[43] Alvarado, 'Eight Hours Are Not A Day', pp. 70-78 (p.73).
[44] Raynold Williams, *Television. Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Fontana, 1974), p. 86.

transposed filmic and televisual aesthetic devices which brings out the working-class characters' moral superiority, media interplay clearly provides the basis for the externalisation of those traits which a positive relationship to one's own rather underprivileged situation brings about. Consequently, the acting in the series is characterised by the same stylistic principle, which also provides the basis for the series structure, namely a correspondence between two structures of internalisation on the formal and thematic levels. For while the characters have internalised the behavioural patterns which make working class life bearable and even enjoyable, their actions are realised on the basis of artistic devices which have been selected from the repertoire of film's and television's aesthetic conventions.

### IV.2.4 The Flow of the Images in a Filmmaker's Television Series

The flow of the images in Fassbinder's *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* is very much determined by the interaction of the characters and their verbal interaction in particular. Although verbal interaction in *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* does not - as we have seen - form a monolithic whole identical with its environment, but actually finds itself in a (moderate) opposition to it, the filmmaker, faithful to his own statements about television's representational conventions, employs above all close shots to represent the characters' predominantly verbal interaction and avoids any grave discords between language and images which might upset the audio-visual unity of the message.[45] Thus, the framing and the composition of the images is basically in line with what David Russell has pointed out as characteristic of television's use of imagery in general. For in his article *A World in Inaction* he argues that 'what is seen on television is always anchored in what is said'.[46] Under the leadership of language, sound and images form a unity that is imperative; television, due to the restricted dimensions of the TV screen, does not favour any discords between the various elements of the representation.

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[45] Cf. section I.2.2 for relevant statement by Fassbinder.
[46] Russell, 'A World in Inaction', pp. 174-179 (p. 175).

However, although Fassbinder largely goes along with television's conventions of image composition, he nonetheless complements it with a visual language which introduces an additional layer of meaning. The director by no means restricts the mise-en-scene of the series to a mere photographing of the characters' faces, but also takes account of their social and spatial environment. In doing so, he not only documents the particular circumstances of the working class milieu, but also comments upon the verbal interaction of the characters. While the predominant use of indoor spaces, which either represent the characters' homes or their work place, is often enlivened by various kinds of lighting or props, which give them a rather personal touch, their use is not exclusive. More often than is perhaps usual for a family soap opera, Fassbinder goes outside and includes images of outdoor spaces in order to motivate or comment on the characters' interaction. As a result, there is none of the claustrophobic atmosphere, which is so characteristic of many of his cinema films. By means of such a use of mise-en-scene and photography the series is provided with a non-verbal subtext which goes beyond what is characteristic of television's representational conventions.

As Fassbinder's mise-en-scene thus undermines television's need for straightforward images, the non-verbal subtext which emerges from it actually works to emphasise the message of the language-centred imagery. For as the director avoids direct juxtapositions and generally uses decor and other means of filmic stylisation in a rather unobtrusive way, the series' photography and mise-en-scene compliment the messages conveyed by character speech; there is hardly any subversive rift between the two elements of representation. As the implementation of stylistic visual means does not lie transverse to the flow of the images and can therefore easily be understood within a realistic interpretation of the respective scenes, Fassbinder once more accelerates the speed of narration. However, since the idea of visually externalising the characters' states of mind is not given up on, the kind of reduced ambiguity in the filmmaker's use of visual stylistic means, which results from this, secures the artistic quality of the series and simultaneously ensures that it does not cross the aesthetic boundaries of television's conventions of representation.

As the accelerated visual language of *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* is largely

based on the kind of visual stylisation which Fassbinder developed in his cinema films, it becomes obvious that it is rendered by means of media interplay. Like in the 1973 film *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, the director uses the opposition between the framing together of characters and shot / reverse shots to indicate the sense of togetherness and antagonisms between the characters respectively. What is more, the use of decor largely obeys by the same logic as in his cinema melodrama when flowers, banisters and various kinds of lighting are used to convey the character's states of mind. However, in contrast to the visual language of the cinema films Fassbinder not only introduces excessive camera movements and frequently makes use of the zoom, but also accelerates the editing rhythm to the effect that the ratio between the character interaction shown and the time allocated to it is changed in favour for the action. Thus, the transposition of his own visual language and its adjustment to the conditions of broadcast television gives his series a filmic air which at times seems to be more in line with conventional filmic forms than with his own cinema films. In any case, however, an aesthetic interaction with the medium of film appears to provide the basis for the visual language applied in the series.

Very much like in his cinema melodramas Fassbinder takes care to frame like-minded characters together in order to stress their sense of togetherness. However, as the characters' playful interaction sometimes results in a rather intense gesticulation this often requires more than mere reframing: camera work in the series is marked by excessive camera movements. When Wolf and Oma fight over the question, who will get into the bathroom first in part one of the series, the characters' intense movements keep the camera very busy trying to keep pace with them. However, tracking and panning not only follow the movements of the characters, but also organise the images in a way that attention is occasionally drawn to minor 'off-side' events, which may bridge the gap between two different strands of action. Consequently, although there are still a number of tableau arrangements to be found in the series, Fassbinder's search for the adequate form for the representation of the family characters' fundamental sense of togetherness and solidarity prompts him to modify a device which he developed in his cinema films in a way that it considerably accelerates the series' speed of narration.

Again, like in Fassbinder's cinema melodramas, the framing together of characters gains its significance vis-à-vis the implementation of shot / reverse shots. However, whereas in cinema films like *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* the implementation of this device results in a stark polarisation between the dramatic opponents, in the series, due to the genre's social breadth, which does not facilitate a clear demarcation between them, this distinction is not so much categorical as it is situational. As conflicts can arise between almost any of the characters, the application of shot / reverse shots is much more frequent in the series, a fact which, in turn, accelerates its editing rhythm. Since this editing technique blends in very nicely with television's general fondness of the shot/ reverse shot,[47] this device hardly possesses the dramatic effect which it undoubtedly has in the cinema film. Consequently, the implementation of Hollywood's preferred continuity device in the series does not so much highlight the irritation of conflict, but rather presents conflict situations as part of the normality of everyday life, a fact which appears to bring it back in line with its original continuity function.

That the shot/ reverse shot combinations are indeed employed to endow the series with a strong element of continuity becomes obvious when one considers the fact that the device is not only used within the boundaries of the individual segments, but also as a link between two different strands of action. Although the series finds itself in fundamental agreement with the composition of television programming in so far as it consists of a succession of 'small sequential unities of images and sounds whose maximum duration seems to be about five minutes',[48] Fassbinder evidently seeks to accelerate and smooth the flow of these sequential units. Thus, the filmmaker occasionally cuts from one strand of action to another one just to show a reaction whereupon the previous strand of action is resumed. Such intertwining is often rendered by shots through a window, or, for example, when Monika listens to the radio's live report about the children's demonstration for the reopening of Oma's kindergarten. This editing technique tends to neutralise the 'sharp breaks between segments',[49] and gives the series a more filmic, a more 'happening' look. The

[47] Ibid.
[48] Ellis, *Visible Fictions*, p. 149.
[49] Ibid., p. 150.

ensuing coherence and fluidity contributes to the general dynamisation of the series' narrative rhythm.

As the dramatic effect of the distinction shot / reverse shot vs. the framing together of characters is thus reduced, the irritation in conflict situations is conveyed by another device: the zoom. Fassbinder often combines reaction shots with fast zooms into the face of the respective character so as to emphasise personal concern. For instance, Fassbinder zooms in on Peter Märthesheimer, who plays a small cameo role in the second episode of the series, after another character makes a remark about television's manipulative power. Hence the zoom can be said to take the place of the long pauses of silence in the 1973 cinema film. However, since the zoom not only accelerates the speed of narration in comparison to the delayed cuts in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, but also combines it with a fast movement of the image, it doubly accelerates the series' narrative speed as a whole. As Fassbinder himself explains the employment of the zoom as an adjustment to televisual forms of representation, it becomes evident that the acceleration of the series' narration is not only due to the transposition of filmic devices, but also to the implementation of television's own forms of representation.

As the way in which camera work and editing are implemented in the series stress the continuity of the interaction, another element of the representation, which usually fulfils this function in a family soap opera, is freed from it: the use of space. Certainly, there are a number of settings in the series, which reoccur persistently. Particularly Wolf's and Käthe's flat as well as Jochen's work place may be called the two resting points of the series' dramaturgy and thereby comply with the genre's use of space as a continuity device.[50] However, otherwise Fassbinder takes pains to free the use of space from its continuity function as he introduces new settings in each episode, a fact which is mirrored on the level of the story insofar as moving house is indeed a reoccurring issue in the series. The repeated introduction of new settings

[50] Ibid., p. 148. This sense of continuity even extends to the viewer's own physical environment, as Fassbinder's general preference for indoor spaces aligns with television's endeavour to match the presumed environment of its reception, i.e. the living-room. Irmela Schneider argues that '[d]ie Wirklichkeitsdarstellung im Fernsehspiel muß der Wirklichkeit des Zuschauers in seinem Wohnzimmer entsprechen'. This shows that Fassbinder aesthetics easily blends in with the medium's convention. - Schneider, 'Das Fernsehspiel', pp. 26-42 (p.27).

adds to the impression of cinematic forward movement in the series and thus reflects the characters' goal-orientation. As Fassbinder moreover uses a considerable number of outdoor settings, which defy the potentially claustrophobic atmosphere of indoor settings,[51] the implementation of space brings about a sense of cinematic freedom in the series which one would search for in vain in the director's cinema films.

With the focus on the social interaction of the characters, the use of theatrical stylisation within the various settings is restricted. As there is neither the space nor the time to create elaborate compositions to comment upon the characters' interaction, the use of decor rather follows the characters' interaction than dominates it. When Oma's face is framed by flowers in the first part of the series, then this can be understood within the context of a birthday party as much as a symbol of her positive and blossoming personality. Similarly, when his office window's blinds projects a grid-like shadow pattern onto Werkshallenleiter Gross's face, this can be interpreted as a realistic representation of the scene as much as an indication of his sense of isolation among demanding workers. As the use of decor thus creates an ambiguity which invites a realistic interpretation as much as a symbolic one, the composition of the images is not necessarily aimed at distanciation as Collins and Porter maintain.[52] Instead, decor appears to be used to vitalise the relationship between the (mostly verbal) character interaction and its visible surroundings. Thus, although the individual elements of the decor are clearly taken from the visual language the director developed in his cinema melodramas, their implementation does not fundamentally affect the unity of the messages conveyed and rather contributes to the general dynamisation of the narration.

As the visual language which the director developed for his first television series is thus implemented to give the series a rather dynamic drive, it is by means of media interplay that the series' visual language externalises the characters' internalisation of the social other. For as the framing together of characters is accelerated by excessive camera movement, the editing rhythm by the frequent use of shot / reverse shots, the use of space by the frequent introduction of new settings and since the use of decor enlivens the interaction of the characters rather than oppresses

[51] The series was shot on location in Cologne and Mönchengladbach.
[52] Collins and Porter, *WDR and the Arbeiterfilm*, p. 53.

it, the general acceleration of Fassbinder's visual language externalises the generally positive and forward-looking attitude of the characters. As the use of these devices is, with the exception of a far-reaching use of the zoom, based on the transposition of artistic devices from the director's own cinema films, media interplay clearly provides the basis for the externalisation of the character's internalisation of social values like solidarity and zest of life. Consequently, the series' visual language rests on the same stylistic principle which has been found in all the works considered so far, the correspondence between two structures of internalisation on the thematic and formal levels. Just as the characters' internalisation of the positive values of solidarity and assertiveness gives them a dynamic drive, the acceleration of the series' visual language is based on those devices, which the director developed in his cinema films.

Evidently, the structural features of *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* reveal the extent to which Fassbinder departed from his cinema aesthetics in order to produce his first series for what was at the time the largest television station in West Germany.[53] Proceeding from the idea of a positive representation of the everyday life of the lower social classes, the filmmaker avoids the antagonistic atmosphere, which characterises practically all of his cinema films and instead focuses on the characters' entering into *meaningful* social relationships. For this purpose Fassbinder employs the structural devices of a genuinely televisual genre, the family series, which allow him to create an easygoing atmosphere which agrees in principle with television's demands for harmonious and balanced representation. However, notwithstanding this aesthetic reorientation in the face of television production, the filmmaker does not 'drown' in television's aesthetic requirements but makes use of media interplay in order to question its underlying ideology. On the basis of his recent discovery of the Hollywood melodrama, Fassbinder remains faithful to his own stylistic principle and visual language and thus creates model situations designed to provide social enlightenment about personal emancipation in a working class milieu. Thus, the director productively appropriates the genre of the television series for his own purposes as he maintains when he points out:

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[53] Lorenz (ed.), *Das ganz normale Chaos*, p. 128.

> Man kann jedes Genre benutzen, um damit etwas Eigenes zu treiben. Ob man nun eine andere Sensibilität an den Mann bringen will oder einen politischen Inhalt.[54]

Against this background it is not surprising that Martina Liebnitz states that 'mit Fassbinder's "Acht Stunden sind kein Tag" werden Serie und Kunst erstmals zu einem im Zusammenhang zu erörternden Begriffspaar'.[55] As has been pointed out, it is a television-adjusted version of Fassbinder's principle of media interplay, which provides much of the basis for this achievement.

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[54] Quotation in Collins and Porter, *WDR and the Arbeiterfilm*, p. 51.

[55] Martina Liebnitz, 'Fernsehserien - Geschichte, Begriff und Kritik', in *Serie - Kunst im Alltag. I.Wissenschaftliches Kolloquium des Instituts für Medienforschung der Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen 'Konrad Wolf' Potsdam-Babelsberg*, Beiträge zur Film- und Fernsehwissenschaft, 43 (Berlin: Vistas, 1992), pp. 148-168 (p. 161).

## IV.3

## *Berlin Alexanderplatz* – Combining Televisual Moderation and an Artaudian Aesthetics of Disturbance

### IV.3.1 Adapting Alfred Döblin's Novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* for Television

Before Fassbinder set out to adapt Alfred Döblin's 1929 novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* as a television series, his literary adaptations for television were marked by a considerable amount of faithfulness to the original work of art. In fact, the adaptations of, for instance, Marieluise Fleißer's folk play *Pioneers in Ingolstadt* (1970), Daniel F. Galouye's novel *World on the Wire*, Henrik Ibsen's play *Nora Helmer* (both 1973), Oskar Maria Graf's novel *The Stationmaster's Wife* (*Bolwieser*) or Claire Boothe's play *The Women* (*Frauen in New York*, both 1977) can easily be received within television's efforts to promote itself as a guardian of traditional high culture. However, as most of these works adapted for television between 1970 and 1979 are about subjects whose basic conflict is either melodramatic or bears the potential for a melodramatic adaptation, faithfulness to the original easily translates into melodrama and thus echoes the director's predilection for the melodramatic genre. Consequently, Jane Shattuc's assessment of the two-part television mini-series *The Stationmaster's Wife* as a faithful melodramatic adaptation is representative for most of Fassbinder's fictional television work.[56]

However, whilst the selection of subjects for his pre-1979 TV adaptations

[56] Shattuc, *Television, Tabloids and Tears*, pp. 108 ff.

gives Fassbinder the possibility to combine faithfulness to the original with his own generic preference, the project of adapting Alfred Döblin's 1929 novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* as a television series puts an end to it. For as the novel gives a rather futuristic portrayal of life in the big city, faithfulness to the original provides little room for a melodramatic elaboration of emotional problems and personal concerns. Following the slogan: 'Los vom Menschen! Mut zur kinetischen Phantasie und zum Erkennen der unglaublich realen Konturen! Tatsachenphantasie!',[57] Döblin creates a montage of diverse events and incidents as they occur in the everyday life of the big city. What emerges from this montage structure is what the author himself called a 'cinema style', a style which is designed to do justice to the 'ungeheure Menge des Geformten'.[58] As *Berlin Alexanderplatz* thus represents the attempt to make the genre of the novel keep up with the accelerated speed of life and the complex structural organisation of the big city, the importance of the protagonist's destiny is deliberately played down: Franz Biberkopf's life appears to be 'peeled' out of the city's countless sign systems in which it constantly threatens to drown. As the basic tenor of Döblin's novel is thus decidedly non- if not anti-melodramatic, a faithful adaptation would no longer result in a melodramatic film.

As the aesthetics of Döblin's novel makes it practically impossible for Fassbinder to stick to the combination of faithfulness and melodrama which marks his previous television adaptations, the director takes his own personal relationship to the novel as the basis for his adaptation. It is in the short essay *Die Städte des Menschen und seine Seele*, whose publication accompanied the transmission of the series in 1980 that Fassbinder explains his life-long fascination with the novel. The filmmaker recalls how Döblin's depiction of the relationship between Franz Biberkopf and his friend / opponent Reinhold, which he interprets as 'eine reine, von nichts Gesellschaftlichem gefährdete Liebe',[59] saved him from the potentially catastrophic effect of his early realisation of homosexual desires. Against this background it is not surprising that he identified with the two characters to the extent

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[57] Alfred Döblin, 'An die Romanautoren und ihre Kritiker', in *Alfred Döblin: Aufsätze zur Literatur* ed. by Walter Muschg (Olten, Freiburg/Br.: Walter, 1963), pp. 15-19 (pp. 18-19).
[58] Ibid., p. 17.
[59] Fassbinder, *Filme befreien den Kopf*, p. 83.

that he was actually able to feel their 'Leiden, Verzweiflung und Angst'.[60] As such a reading of the novel allows the director to discern an enormously 'differenziertes Unterbewußtsein' in Biberkopf's personality, he regards Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, very much in contrast to the author's original intentions, as 'wahrscheinlich der erste Versuch, Freudsche Erkenntnisse in Kunst umzusetzen'.[61]

As Fassbinder thus gives precedence to his own personal concerns, his adaptation of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* obviously departs from his previous work for television, for which faithfulness to the original is a characteristic feature. Instead, the adaptation of Döblin's novel is much more in line with those adaptations, which the director produced for the cinema. In fact, just like the adaptation of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, the cinema adaptations of Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Despair* (1977) and Jean Genet's novel *Querelle de Brest* (1982) were accompanied by short essays in which Fassbinder discusses his own relationship to the original novels and explains the personal motivation which prompted him to translate them into films.[62] It is as early as 1974, when he adapted Theodor Fontane's novel *Effi Briest*, that Fassbinder first developed this method of adaptation which enabled him to use an original literary work in order to work through his own attitude:

> Es ist kein Film, der eine Geschichte erzählt, sondern es ist ein Film, der eine Haltung nachvollzieht. [...] Mein Problem ist gewesen, meine Haltung zu der Gesellschaft, in der ich lebe, dadurch klar zu machen, indem ich versuche, einen Film über Fontane zu machen.[63]

As the precedence which the filmmaker's cinema adaptations give to the issues of the present over those of the past is equally characteristic of the adaptation of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Fassbinder evidently transposes a method of adaptation hitherto reserved for the cinema into the medium of television in order to turn Döblin's novel into a television series.[64]

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[60] Ibid., p. 82.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Cf. Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, pp. 100-103, and Fassbinder, *Filme befreien den Kopf*, pp. 116-118.
[63] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 54.
[64] There is also a third method of adaptation, which Fassbinder appears to have reserved for the theatre. For in the theatre Fassbinder appears rather to discard the original play than to adapt it. In fact, his theatre adaptations involve a lot of crossing out, rewriting, changing points and emphases. The results of this procedure can hardly be called adaptations in the conventional sense of the word.

It is on the basis of this concept of adaptation, which had previously been reserved for the cinema, that Fassbinder pronounces his intention to adapt *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in an experimental way:

> [Ich] habe ... mich ... entschlossen, ... den Versuch zu unternehmen, mit Döblins 'Berlin Alexanderplatz' das Protokoll einer Beschäftigung mit dieser ganz speziellen Literatur mit meinen filmischen Mitteln letztlich wohl als Experiment zu wagen.[65]

In fact, much more than *Eight Hours are Not a Day*, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* bears the marks of the aesthetic development, which Fassbinder went through in the cinema. Like in his late Artaud-inspired cinema films the director focuses on the issue of identity and raises it to the thematic level of the narration. Hence the series moves along the margins between individualism and social education, between heterosexuality and homosexuality, sanity and insanity, i.e. problems Fassbinder was strongly interested in. In fact, Kaja Silverman, for instance, finds the similarities between *In a Year with 13 Moons* and *Berlin Alexanderplatz* so striking that she considers the two films together under the title of *Masochistic Ecstasy and the Ruination of Masculinity in Fassbinder's Cinema*.[66] Thus, it does not come as a surprise that many of those aesthetic elements and motifs, which the filmmaker developed in the second half of the 1970s, are carried over into the television series. It is this transposition of his late, Artaud-inspired cinema aesthetics that justifies the notion of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* as an experimental project.[67] In fact, when the series

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Peter Iden therefore writes: 'Bearbeitungen wurden aufgeführt und man sah ihnen an, was Fassbinder gerne zugab: Der Autor hatte die Vorlage kaum gelesen ("Kaffeehaus", "Das brennende Dorf")' - Iden, pp. 17-28 (p. 19). Keeping in mind that Fassbinder was fascinated by Straub's way of updating literary texts, Yaak Karsunke's explanation of this method of adaptation appears as most plausible. In the context of Fassbinder's *Iphigenia in Tauris by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe* he argues: 'Fassbinder... ging einfach vom Gebrauch aus, den die bürgerliche Gesellschaft von der angeblich reinen Dichtung macht: Produktionsmittel falschen Bewußtseins und herrschaftsstabilisierende Propaganda'. - Karsunke, pp. 7-16 (p. 13). This argument is in keeping with Fassbinder's own commentary about the *antiteater*'s adaptation of Sophocles's *Ajax*: 'Das [W]ichtigste ist, scheint mir, Unbehagen an den Einrichtungen des Bürgertums zu schaffen' - ibid.

[65] Fassbinder, *Filme befreien den Kopf*, p. 85.

[66] Kaja Silvermann, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (London, New York: Routledge, 1992).

[67] It is on this basis that Fassbinder criticises the novel's first adaptation by Phil Jutzi. Jutzi's 1931 film, the filmmaker argues, deviates from the novel's structure to such an extent that it has to be considered an independent work of art rather than a faithful adaptation. Although for different reasons, Fassbinder thus agrees with the opinions maintained by contemporary critics like Herbert Ihering, Alfred Kantorowicz and Leo Kreuzer. They criticised Jutzi's adaptation for having reduced the novel to the story of Franz Biberkopf, which is rendered very much in the tradition of

caused a public uproar at the time of its first transmission this was largely due to Fassbinder's more cinematic use of the television screen.[68]

It is interesting to see that this move towards a more cinematic television aesthetics endows Fassbinder's adaptation of Döblin's novel with a degree of melodramatisation which makes the series fit in nicely with television's preference for the melodramatic mode of representation. For as Fassbinder's experimental approach to the novel shifts the emphasis away from the depiction of the complexity of life in the big city and towards the question of identity, his adaptation very much concentrates on the story of Franz Biberkopf and thus personalises Döblin's futuristic notion of social interaction to a large extent.[69] Although this kind of personalisation of the action has been pointed out as 'ein Aspekt der medienspezifischen Verbilderung' which has 'Zwangscharakter'[70] and thus brings Fassbinder's adaptation in line with television drama's preference for melodrama, this modification accounts for much of the critics' disappointment over the series. The standpoint Heinz Brüggemann takes in his article is symptomatic here: what was generally expected was a faithful adaptation of the avant-gardist piece of literature and not a melodramatic story about the relationships between Biberkopf, Reinhold and Mieze.[71]

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conventional, linear storytelling. The apparent difference between the book and the film may have provided another impulse for Fassbinder to adapt the novel again. - Herbert Ihering, 'Der "Alexanderplatz"-Film', and Alfred Kantorowicz, 'Der Film vom Franz Biberkopf', both in *Materialien zu Alfred Döblin 'Berlin Alexanderplatz'*, ed. by Matthias Prangel (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1975), pp. 241-243 and 243-244. Also: Leo Kreuzer, 'Stadt erzählen: Roman Film Hörspiel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*', in Elmar Buck, Leo Kreuzer, Jürgen Peters, *Die schöne Leiche aus der Rue Bellechasse: Einiges über Schreiben, Spielen, Filmen*, ed. by Jürgen Manthey (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1977), pp. 87-105.

[68] As Kristina Zerges analysis of the viewers' response to Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* has shown that their disappointment over the series was mainly due to two artistic devices which are rather typical of the director's cinema aesthetics. The fact that there was "too little forward movement" and the extensive use of low key lighting were "not recognized as an artistic element" and therefore constituted the most frequent points of criticism. - Kristina Zerges, 'Die TV-Serie 'Berlin Alexanderplatz' von Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Dokumentation und Analyse eines Rezeptionsprozesses', *Spiel* 1 (1983), 137-181 (p. 158).

[69] The visual element which is most in tune with Döblin's futuristic approach is the series' black-and-white title sequence. It is composed of a number of photographs from the 1920s which are superimposed onto the image of the moving wheels of a steam locomotive. The two simultaneous movements aptly translate Döblin's montage style for the screen.

[70] Faulstich, *Ästhetik des Fernsehens*, p. 81

[71] Heinz Brüggemann, '"Berlin Alexanderplatz" oder 'Franz, Mieze, Reinhold, Tod und Teufel'?', in *Rainer Werner Fassbinder* (Munich: edition text+kritik, 1989), pp. 51-65. For other comparisons between Döblin's novel and Fassbinder's series see: Sally Schoen Bergman, 'Berlin Alexanderplatz: Fassbinder's Last Masterpiece' in *National Traditions in Motion Pictures* ed. by D. Radcliff-Umstead (Kent: Kent State University, 1985) pp. 85-91; Vinzenz B. Burg, 'Rainer Werner Fassbinder im

However, although the director clearly puts the emphasis on the melodramatisation of the original, his departure from the original novel is not as complete as it may seem. For as Fassbinder takes up on television's own aesthetic forms in that he adapts *Berlin Alexanderplatz* as a series in 13 parts and an epilogue, his experimental approach coincides with an important structural characteristic of Döblin's avant-gardistic novel: the serialisation of events. Döblin himself explains this structural device when he substantiates his aesthetic approach by referring to the great epic works of the past:

> Dasselbe Merkmal der unbegrenzten Form, wenn man so etwas überhaupt sagen kann, setzte sich auch zur Zeit der früheren Erzähler durch. Dies Merkmal ist nämlich auch ein inneres der Epik. Auch die früheren Epen hatten kaum einen Anfang, und ein Ende bestimmt nicht. Ein Mann hörte heute auf zu erzählen und morgen erzählte er weiter, die Leute wollten etwas Neues hören, aber da man nicht viel Stoffe hat und das Interesse wächst, wenn man an Altes anknüpft, so macht man *Serienarbeit*, Arbeit am laufenden Band, Fortsetzungen ohne Ende.[72] [my italics - K.U.M.]

It is this structural principle, the serialisation of events, which Döblin realises by means of the montage structure of his 'cinema style', which finds entry into Fassbinder's adaptation when he realises it as a television series. That the director must as least have partially been aware of this similarity may be concluded from his statement that Döblin's novel is a 'Dreigroschenroman, im einzelnen nicht mehr als eben eine Aneinanderreihung mehrerer Boulevard-Zeitungsreißer'.[73]

As Fassbinder's adaptation of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* thus combines features of his own cinema aesthetics and elements of television aesthetics, the series is situated right in the middle ground between cinema and television, an aspect which is largely neglected by Kaja Silvermann and Achim Haag, who analyse the series mainly in terms of Fassbinder's authorship.[74] By contrast, it is Jane Shattuc and Martin Blaney

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Fernsehen und im Kino: Berlin Alexanderplatz', *Medien + Erziehung* 2 (1981), 97-104; and Walace S. Watson, '"Sexuality Wanders Dark Paths": Fassbinder's Romanticization of Berlin Alexanderplatz', *Literature - Film Quarterly* 4 (1990), 245-250.

[72] Alfred Döblin, 'Bau des epischen Werks', in *Alfred Döblin: Aufsätze zur Literatur* ed. by Walter Muschg (Olten, Freiburg/Br.: Walter, 1963), pp. 103-132 (p. 124).

[73] Fassbinder, *Filme befreien den Kopf*, p. 88.

[74] Achim Haag, *Deine Sehnsucht kann keiner stillen: Rainer Werner Fassbinders Berlin Alexanderplatz* (Munich: Trickster, 1992).

who have drawn attention to this fact. While Shattuc does so on the basis of her differentiation between Fassbinder's confessional melodramas for the art house cinema and his melodramatic literary adaptations for television, within which *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is ascribed a synthesising key position,[75] Blaney explains his assessment within the broader framework of the institutional relations between cinema and television in the 1970. He argues that Fassbinder's second major TV series has

> since its transmission in 1980 come to be held by many observers of the German cinema as a primary example of the symbiotic relationship of film and television in West Germany and to be as much 'at home' in the cinema as on the television screen.[76]

Thus Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is exemplary for a general tendency in the West German film production of the 1970s and supports Günther Rohrbach's 1977 thesis about the emergence of the 'amphibian' film.[77] As the co-operation between film industry and the various television stations had increased considerably by the second half of the 1970s, film productions like *Berlin Alexanderplatz* more often than not strove to abide by the representational conventions of both cinema and television.

### IV.3.2 *Berlin Alexanderplatz*: The Television Plotting of an Avant-Gardist Novel

Putting the character of Franz Biberkopf at the centre of the dramaturgy, Fassbinder's adaptation of Döblin's novel is very much determined by the conflict between this character and his social environment, the Berlin of the late 1920s. Having served a four-year prison term in Berlin-Tegel for the manslaughter of his girlfriend Ida, Franz Biberkopf, on his return into the German capital, promises to himself to become a decent man. However, while he thus imposes a moral standard upon himself which is obviously indebted to the re-education he went through during his prison term, the

[75] Shattuc, *Television, Tabloids and Tears*, p. 162.
[76] Blaney, *Symbiosis or Confrontation?*, p. 334.
[77] Günther Rohrbach, 'Das Subventions-TV: Ein Plädoyer für den amphibischen Film', in *Theorie des Fernsehspiels* ed. by Claus Beling (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1979), pp. 160-164.

social reality of what was at the time the third largest city in the world does not appear to favour such projects. For as Biberkopf returns to the proletarian quarters of eastern Berlin, he enters an environment which is characterised by poverty and joblessness, class struggle and ideological trench battles, prostitution and betrayal, blackmail and crime. As this clash between the protagonist's good intentions and the largely amoral character of his environment puts the problematic of non-integration at the centre of the series' dramaturgy, Fassbinder makes use of what John Ellis has termed a dramaturgical 'groundbase', a basic problematic from which all events in the series are derived, at the expense of its integrative function.

However, although the series thus develops its story on the basis of the issue of non-integration, there is a strong emphasis on social integration in the series. For as becoming a decent man effectively means to accept and integrate with society, Fassbinder, instead of stressing the gap between Biberkopf and his social environment, uses the ensemble of characters, which makes up what can be called the underworld of east Berlin, in order to create a kind of 'pseudo-family' for his television series.[78] As a consequence the director abandons the structure of the novel and turns those chapters of the book in which the two important women in Biberkopf's life play a major role, the novel's sixth and seventh chapter, into six episodes (parts 7-12). Thus, it is above all Reinhold, a member of Pums's gang of organised burglars and the prostitute Mieze who provide the 'familial' context for Biberkopf's endeavour to become a 'good' member of society. Consequently, as there is a strong emphasis on social integration which finds itself in contradiction to the opposition between Biberkopf and his social environment, the dramaturgy exceeds the series' groundbase and in doing so fails to meet its dramatic potential.

As the creation of a pseudo family thus undermines the dramatugical set-up of the series, the emphasis on social integration brings out the basic conflict between Biberkopf's resolution to be decent and the social reality of the big city. For as the emphasis on social integration results in a highly personalised form of interaction, the conflict between Biberkopf and his social environment, very much in line with

[78] Heinz Brüggemann, "Berlin Alexanderplatz", pp. 51-65 (p. 63). Although many critics (e.g. Thomas Elsaesser, Eric Rentschler) have stressed the important role women play in the series, Brüggemann is the only critic who actually puts this aspect into relation to the genre and the medium Fassbinder uses for his adaptation.

the issue tackled in the director's Artaud-inspired cinema films, realises itself as the fight between two men, Biberkopf and the man whom he obviously regards as his own double: Reinhold. Given this misperception of reality, it is not surprising that Biberkopf is repeatedly taken advantage of and eventually victimised.[79] As a result, what comes to the fore is what the protagonist has splitted off from his personality in order to maintain it. Especially towards the end of the series he is haunted by the recurring traumatic images relating to the death of his girlfriend Ida and the time he spent in prison before he finally falls prey to insanity in the epilogue of the series. As the fight between the two men thus brings out Biberkopf's self-imposed emotional repression, the emphasis on social integration purports the conflict, which the attempt at simultaneously living outside and inside society entails.

In order to give his story of the fight between two men an appropriate structure, Fassbinder transposes strategies and devices from his cinema films and combines them with those, which are familiar from television soap operas. As the series' starting point is provided by Biberkopf's resolution to uphold his decency in a basically amoral social reality, the series' dramatic structure is characterised by a fundamental two-strandedness in which the protagonist has 'keinen gleichartigen Gegenspieler', but rather confronts various 'Inkarnationen einer feindlichen Welt'.[80] As the series thus makes use of what Volker Klotz has pointed out as characteristic of the open dramatic structure, it is in line with cinema films like *In a Year with 13 Moons* in which the protagonist has likewise to face up to a hostile world. Accordingly, the titles of the individual episodes of the series are all - apart from that of the epilogue, which also differs from the other episodes with regard to composition and length - related to the character of Biberkopf.[81] However, as

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[79] Achim Haag interprets the strong emotional ties between Biberkopf and Reinhold in terms of the sado-masochistic traits which he recognises in Fassbinder's own personality. Achim Haag, '"Er hat immer diese Sehnsucht nach Liebe gehabt, und deswegen war er böse": Franz Biberkopf und Reinhold, die Kontrahenten der Seelenkämpfe R.W. Fassbinders', in *Rainer Werner Fassbinder* (Munich: edition text+kritik, 1989), pp. 35-49.

[80] Klotz, *Geschlossene und offene Form im Drama*, p. 109.

[81] As the focus on Biberkopf's development largely denies the series the parallel structure which enables Fassbinder's first series *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* to unfold its social breadth, the episodes are not entitled in a way which reflects the ups and downs of the various strands of action, but in a way which echoes Biberkopf's questions about or the insight into his own situation: part I: The Punishment Commences; part II: How Is One Supposed to Live When One Does Not Want to Die; part III: A Hammer On the Head Can Hurt the Soul; part IV: A Handful of People in the Depth of

Biberkopf's conflict with Berlin's urban reality is gradually narrowed down to the conflict between two men, the emerging 'pseudo-family' and the protagonist's traumatic memory require Fassbinder to go beyond the two-strandedness of the open dramatic structure and partially approximate what is more typical of a television series: a dramatic structure of several strands running parallel to one another. It is on this basis that the series' structure keeps to what John Ellis has pointed out as characteristic of television soap opera's dramatic structure: a series of small segments used for the persistent 'repetition of a [melodramatic] problematic'.[82]

The first four of the series' thirteen episodes concentrate on Biberkopf's return to the city of Berlin, his attempts to rebuild his life and the first blows he suffers in the process. After having left the prison in Tegel rather timidly, Biberkopf (Günter Lamprecht) meets the Jew Nachum (Peter Kollek) who seeks to cheer him up by telling him the story of the impostor Stephan Zanowitsch. Thus put back on his feet, Biberkopf seeks to gain relief from sexual repression: having been faced with his own impotence in his encounter with the prostitute Paula (Mechthild Grossmann), Biberkopf regains his confidence when he rapes Ida's sister Minna (Karin Baal), an event which is followed by the first flashback to his killing of his former girlfriend. Having subsequently started a relationship with the Polish girl Lina (Elisabeth Trissenaar), he, trying to make a living, first attempts to sell small articles in the street before he lets himself be hired to sell the national-socialist party organ *Völkischer Beobachter*. After having therefore been attacked by left-wing workers in the local pub, an event which is followed by a flashback to Biberkopf sitting in his prison cell, Lina puts him in touch with Lüders (Hark Bohm), with whom he henceforth sells shoelaces on the doorstep. However, as Biberkopf is careless enough to tell Lüders about the sexual favours he had been granted by a lonely widow (Angela Schmid), he is badly betrayed by his companion and withdraws into solitude to drown his sorrow in alcohol.

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Silence; part V: A Reaper with the Power of God; part VI: A Love Always Costs Much; part VII: Remember: A Vow Can Be Amputated; part: VIII: The Sun Warms the Skin which It Sometimes Burns; part IX: Of the Eternities Between the Many and the Few; part X: Even into Walls Loneliness Tears Cracks of Madness; part XI: Knowledge Is Power and The Early Bird Catches the Worm; part XII: The Snake in the Soul of the Snake; part XIII: The Exterior and the Interior and the Secret of the Fear of the Secret; epilogue: My Dream of the Dream of Franz Biberkopf

[82] Ellis, *Visible Fictions*, p. 154.

After his recovery, Biberkopf meets and becomes friends with Reinhold (Gottfried John), a member of Pums's gang of petty criminals, a relationship whose development and catastrophic effect are told in parts five, six and seven of the series. In part five both men start a 'spirited white slave trade'. Reinhold, who is not able to sustain a long-term relationship with a woman, passes his ex-girlfriends on to Biberkopf who, in turn, passes them on to other men until he decides to opt out and refuses to accept Reinhold's latest girlfriend Trude (Irm Herrmann) at the beginning of part six. Later in the same episode Biberkopf witness how Bruno (Volker Spengler), another member of Pums's gang, is beaten up on the street. As he yields to Bruno's wish to report to Pums (Ivan Desny) about the incident, he himself is invited to act as his replacement in what is called some kind of delivery. As Biberkopf realises that he has become part of a burglary, a flashback of him sitting in his prison cell is intercut again and he no longer wants to be part of it. Having thus rocked the boat, Reinhold kicks him out of the escape car so that he is run over by a following car. However, as Franz survives the assault and 'merely' loses his right arm, his former girlfriend Eva (Hanna Schygulla) and her suitor Herbert (Roger Fritz) put him up to oversee his convalescence.

Having broken up with Reinhold and Pums's gang, Biberkopf now enters into the world of women. His former girlfriend Eva introduces him to Mieze (Barbara Sukowa) and the emerging relationship between the two covers much of the following three parts of the series. Mieze, who works as a prostitute, moves in with Biberkopf and the couple start a very romantic relationship until Biberkopf gets hold of one of her suitors' love letters. At this point the flashback to Biberkopf's assault on Ida (Barbara Valentin) is repeated for the first time. Subsequently, Biberkopf has a brief affair with Eva. The flashback is repeated a second time at the beginning of part nine before Biberkopf decides to resume his relationship with Mieze. When Franz subsequently pays a third visit to the Great Whore of Babylon - the previous two visits took place in part seven and eight - he is finally prepared to listen. Once the flashback has been repeated for a third time, Biberkopf is reproached by the pub owner Max (Claus Holm) that he has given up on his will to be a decent man. At the beginning of part ten Eva decides that she wants to be the mother of Biberkopf's

child and after Mieze and Biberkopf have had an argument about her having just one suitor instead of several, Biberkopf yields to Eva's wish.

As Reinhold re-enters Biberkopf's life at the beginning of part eleven the final three episodes of the series are devoted to the fateful triangle between the two men and Mieze. Once Biberkopf has rejoined Pums's gang, a fact, which Mieze is unhappy about, Reinhold meets Mieze, develops an interest in her, and therefore approaches Biberkopf about the resumption of their white slave trade. Still convinced that he would be able to re-educate Reinhold, Biberkopf decides to hide him in his bed in order to show off his harmonious relationship. However, what Reinhold witnesses is a big fight as Mieze explains to him that night that she has fallen in love with her suitor's son. A romantic trip to Freienwalde marks their reconciliation; however, having become suspicious about Reinhold, Mieze asks Biberkopf to be introduced to his friends. In the meantime, Reinhold blackmails Biberkopf's friend Meck (Franz Buchrieser) in order to be put in touch with Mieze. Thus Meck and Mieze go on another trip to Freienwalde, where Reinhold, who has been expecting them, makes his advances on Mieze. However, as Mieze does not appreciate that, Reinhold kills her during a walk in the forest. Once the gang has undertaken another burglary, which, following a vote of the gang members, was not aimed at clothes but money, Meck, driven by his conscience, shows the police the shallow grave in the forest. As unsuspecting Biberkopf learns about Mieze's death from the newspaper, he collapses with insane laughter. Once more there is a flashback to the scene of Ida's death.

It is in the series' epilogue that Fassbinder gives an impression of the ordeal Biberkopf goes through until he convalesces from his disease. In a succession of largely unconnected sequences the epilogue meanders between reality and nightmare and thus not only questions identity in a way Artaud would certainly have approved of, but also gives Biberkopf the possibility to revisit all the different stations he went through and the characters who played a major role in his life. Accompanied by the two angels Terah (Magdalena Montezuma) and Sarug (Werner Schroeter), the protagonist looks for Mieze's grave on the cemetery where he is not only exposed to Ida's, Cilly's, Fränze's and Lüders's accusations and insults, but also discovers that

Pums has hanged himself. In the meantime, in order to evade persecution as a murderer, Reinhold assumed a different identity as a pickpocket and let himself be sent to prison where he has a homosexual affair with his cellmate Konrad (Raul Gimenez). In the following sequence the doctors at the hospital discuss diagnosis and therapy of the paralysed protagonist whereupon he has to face the reproaches, insults and accusations of the members of Pums's gang, Baumann (Gerhard Zwerenz), who gave him refuge after Lüders's betrayal, Reinhold and Meck. Also, in a drawn-out sequence Biberkopf's masochism is brought out as he voluntarily lets himself be treated like a piece of meat at the abattoir. All this culminates in a boxing fight between Biberkopf and Reinhold before the death of the old Biberkopf is announced and the new one returns to reality as a factory's assistant porter.

As this narrative structure is made up of elements which can be traced back to television aesthetics on the one hand and Fassbinder's own cinema aesthetics on the other, it is by means of media interplay that the artistic externalisation of the main character's internalisation of the social other is achieved. For while the combination of the open dramatic structure with the series' integrative social breadth makes it clear that Biberkopf's vow to become a decent man simultaneously keeps him outside and inside his social environment, the repeated insertion of flashbacks relating to his traumatic past experiences and their culmination in the epilogue of the series shows that the realisation of this resolution comes at the price of his mental health. This implementation of the open dramatic structure being reminiscent of films like *In a Year with 13 Moons* and a play like *Garbage, the City and Death*, and the insertion of flashback sequences and shots into the narrative flow of the series taking up on the filmic technique of montage, media interplay clearly provides the basis for the externalisation of Biberkopf's internalisation of social values and standards. Thus the dramatic structure of Fassbinder's second major television series follows the stylistic principle which has already been identified in the rendition of other works by the director, namely the correspondence between two structures of internalisation on the thematic and formal levels. Just as Biberkopf internalises the value of decency, the series' dramatic structure is informed by elements taken from the director's cinema aesthetics.

Character interaction in Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is clearly determined by the fact that the characters have given in to their social environment. As they try to realise their wish for happiness and personal satisfaction in an environment which is characterised by poverty, unemployment and a general lack of prospects for improvement, they, rather than taking up on the conditions under which they live, negate them: their search for love and money, the two embodiments of happiness, makes them take recourse to violence. In fact, betrayal, blackmail and white slave trade are just as much part of the characters' interaction as manslaughter, the infliction of serious injuries and even murder. Whilst Biberkopf is repeatedly victimised by male violence - he is not only taken advantage of by Lüders, but also tricked into the participation in one of Pums's burglaries, seriously injured when his resistance incites Reinhold to throw him out of the escape car, and eventually deprived of his girlfriend Mieze when her resistance provokes Reinhold's murderous lust - he himself places women at the receiving end of this. He has not only killed his former girlfriend Ida, but also rapes her sister Minna, enters into a white slave trade with Reinhold and also beats his new girlfriend Mieze compulsively when she admits her love to her suitor's son.[83] Consequently, the fact that the characters have surrendered to the conditions of their environment entails a considerable amount of violence.

However, although the characters' interaction is largely defined by the violence they use against one another, a fact which again invites a reference to Artaud's aesthetics of cruelty, their everyday interaction is marked by a clear emphasis on positive social interaction. The characters are not only frequently shown as they go about their everyday business together, but also how they make an effort to make the most of their everyday life, remain open for other people's concerns and - for most of the time - treat each other with respect. They frequently take the time to

[83] For a close analysis of the relationships between men and women in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* see Thomas Elsaesser, 'Berlin Alexanderplatz: Biberkopf'/S/Exchanges', *Wide Angle*, 1 (1990), 30-43, and Eric Rentschler, 'Terms of Dismemberment: The Body in/and/of Fassbinder's Berlin Alexanderplatz', in *German Film and Literature: Adaptations and Transformations*, ed. by Eric Rentschler (New York, London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 305-321.

talk to one another even when they are busy doing other things, share their dreams just as much as their worries and appear to help and support one another whenever it is necessary. With such an emphasis on giving and taking, the everyday interaction of the characters appears as essentially symmetrical, emotionally free and even trust-inspiring and thus resembles more that of a village than that of a big city. Thus, in spite of the fact that the characters are largely defined within the framework of the underworld's pecking order, there is a strong emphasis on treating each other in a positive way which, similar to Fassbinder's series *Eight Hours Are Not a Day*, stresses the characters' strong sense of togetherness.[84]

While the emphasis on positive everyday interaction thus undermines the hierarchy of violence among them, the characters' sense of togetherness brings out their having surrendered to the social conditions under which they live. For as Fassbinder's characters make an effort at treating each other in a friendly way, it becomes obvious that the violence they inflict upon one another is not the result of calculation. Instead, the rather sadistic violence in the series *Berlin Alexanderplatz* appears to result from forces which the characters are not entirely in control of and therefore not directly responsible for. Consequently there is something child-like about Fassbinder's characters which allows them to follow their emotions in a way that their frustration, dissatisfaction and general repression is directly translated into action. The repeated transgression of the limits of legality appears as a rather innocent attempt at obtaining what they have been denied. As the characters' strong sense of togetherness thus makes it clear that every act of violence is just another indication of the characters' strong desire for personal satisfaction and happiness, it leaves no doubt about their victim status.

Artistically, the rendition of the characters' rather child-like interaction is largely indebted to the slow acting style Fassbinder developed during his *antiteater* years. As the characters try to wrench something worthwhile from unfavourable

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[84] Quite obviously, the series' rather 'soapy' character interaction is part of an aesthetic concession to television's representational conventions. For as the director points out in one of his interviews, the projected cinema adaptation of the novel was to be decidedly less moderate. Fassbinder takes the media context into account, prompting him to vary the general tone in his adaptations. - Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 153. (The *cinema* film *Berlin Alexanderplatz* was never produced; its script, however, is in the possession of the Rainer Werner Fassbinder Foundation, Berlin.)

social conditions, the acting establishes their relationship to the environment as that of a general effort at accommodating. Although the characters indeed inflict a considerable amount of violence upon one another - a fact, which appears to aggravate, rather than ease the conditions under which the characters live - there is nothing exciting about the various acts of violence committed in the series. Instead, as they appear to result from a rather melancholic insight into the limitations of human life in general and the social conditions in the eastern Berlin of the 1920s in particular, the edge is taken off the violence. The energy invested into violence being thus prevented from finding entrance into the acting style, the acting is liable considerably to slow down the speed of the interaction. Indeed, a lot of attention is paid to detail, which, in turn, offers a lot of space for the depiction of how the characters react emotionally to one another. As the series' acting style is thus reminiscent of the acting style used in the director's cinema melodramas, media interplay is clearly at the heart of the acting in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.

The fact that the acting's relationship to the rather poor environment is determined by the idea of accommodation can easily be detected from the amount of attention, which is paid to the almost minute movements and routine occupations of which everyday life consists. There is an emphasis put on the necessity and difficulty to earn money, there is washing and cleaning as well as the movements and conversations in the street and in the pub. Biberkopf is often shown when he is alone in his room apparently craving for something that would make him happy, while his landlady Frau Bast (Brigitte Mira) is given enough room to indulge in her curiosity about the protagonist's ways. What is more, the characters are often seen as they *walk* from A to B, while doing so run into C, and all that may be observed by D, and there is an emphasis on how the characters establish contacts with third persons when the situation requires it. With such an emphasis on interpersonal attention, the acting establishes space as a kind of womb: trying to make it comfortable for themselves in an environment in which possibilities for improvement are very restricted, the characters have largely surrendered personal freedom for the sake of a kind of warm-hearted attentiveness which saves them from loneliness.

Such an emphasis on the movements of the everyday is highly reminiscent of

the director's own cinema melodramas in which minute details of everyday activities are given a weight which by far exceeds what their nature suggests. However, while in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, for instance, this emphasis on everyday movements is justified by the significance they gain within the framework of a clear separation of the characters in two different camps, which turns space into a means to purport their antagonism, in the television series the emphasis on everyday activities establishes space as a continuum. As this continuum may, as has been done, be characterised as a kind of womb, in which life is reasonably comfortable, it is not only restricted to the series' diegesis, but also extends into the life of the viewers: it matches the presumed comfort any viewer of the series may experience within the intimacy of his own home. As this kind of familiarity in the relationship between acting and space is typical of television drama in general,[85] Fassbinder's modification of a use of space, which he first developed in his cinema melodramas, meets an important parameter of televisual representation.

As the acting by and large establishes space as a kind of womb, it does not come as a surprise that it equally appears to constitute time as a kind of time warp. Although emotional interaction and violence are constitutive parts of the characters' interaction, emotions are acted out with a kind of mellow slowness, which denies them any major impact. When Reinhold throws Biberkopf out of the escape car in part six, this, although it is supposed to happen at high speed, appears to happen at a speed of about five miles per hour. Similarly, the emotional impact which Reinhold's first appearance has on Biberkopf is played down as the flow of events is actually halted for an extended voice over passage. Conversely, emotions appear to be freely spread around among the characters as long as they do not translate into action: the acting assigns a considerable amount of time to the way the characters react to one another, making extensive use of eye contact or occasional child-like games. As the acting thus keeps the characters in a fragile balance between inauthenticity and sincerity, causal links are 'loosened' and time becomes 'amorphous',[86] a fact, which is underscored by the persistent recurrence of certain images related to Biberkopf's

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[85] David Russell points out that the idea of 'familiarity' is indeed paramount for television drama: 'Familiarity ... is absolutely crucial to the televisual experience. Television is a family medium, existing with a domesticated space....' - Russell, 'A World in Inaction', p. 175.
[86] Shattuc, *Television, Tabloids and Tears*, pp. 148-149.

past.

This slowness of the acting which allows the director to place more importance on reaction than action is, just like the emphasis on everyday activities, highly reminiscent of the slow acting style used in Fassbinder's cinema melodramas of the first half of the 1970s. However, while in the cinema films the slowness of the acting serves to accentuate and thus ascribe significance to minor details of the interaction, in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* it achieves the opposite effect: it takes the edge off the characters' violent actions and thus brings the interaction close to what Russell has called television drama's 'world of inaction', in which, as Horace Newcomb has noted, the characters' reactive emotionality is the centre of attention:

> Television is at its best when it offers us faces, reactions, explorations of emotions registered by human beings. The importance is not placed on the action, though that is certainly vital as stimulus. Rather it is on the reaction to the action, on the human response.[87]

However, while Fassbinder's acting style thus meets two important parameters of televisual representation, its smoothing effect works against what Hickethier has termed 'media time', the average speed of narration in the various media. Thus it is not surprising that boredom was the main point of criticism among the viewers of the series' first transmission.[88]

As the series' acting style is thus based on the acting style which Fassbinder developed during his *antiteater* years, it is by means of media interplay that the director gives access to the characters' internalisation of the social other. While the characters' accommodation in the poor environment shows that they have surrendered freedom for the sake of security in togetherness, the slowness of the acting conveys the fact that the characters have lost the ability to act their feelings and that all the violent action in the series is rather the outcome of their repression than their being translated into action. As the characters' wish to find security in a womb-like sense of togetherness as well as their emotional repression appears to be due to the economic hardship in the proletarian quarters of eastern Berlin, the

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[87] Horace Newcomb, 'Toward a TV Aesthetic', in *Television - the Critical View*, ed. by Horace Newcomb (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 478-494 (p. 480).
[88] Shattuc, *Television, Tabloids and Tears*, p. 170.

implementation of artistic means transposed from the director's theatre and film work is aimed at the externalisation of the internalisation of the social conditions. Consequently, the acting style in the series is based on what has been pointed out as the fundamental artistic principle of Fassbinder's work, the correspondence between to structures of internalisation on the formal and thematic levels: just as the characters internalise what their social environment requires of them, the artistic rendition makes use of devices which have been developed in a different medium.

### IV.3.4 The Undercutting of the Characters' Verbal Interaction by Cinematic Devices

Just like the interaction, the verbal communication among the characters is determined by the social environment of Berlin's underprivileged proletarian quarters. This does not mean that the characters wholeheartedly agree with what is happening around them; it does, however, mean that instead of laying open, verbal interaction is aimed at covering up the inconvenient truths of reality. While Biberkopf seeks to deny what does not fit into his chosen image of decency, the people in his environment, i.e. mainly the members of Pums's gang of organised burglars, are not less concerned about what needs to be hidden. As all the characters thus appear to agree that language ought to be used as a means to hide the true nature of things, verbal communication in the series is not only more or less identical with this environment but also in its form symmetrical. Language appears to be distributed evenly among the characters and there are few instances that would indicate a certain character's attempt to verbally take control over or even repress another character's voice. Consequently, the tacit agreement that language ought not to be used in order to pierce the true nature of things too deeply brings about a positive communicative ethics, which makes the verbal interaction essentially univocal.

However, as the characters are thus univocally determined to use language as an instrument to cover up the inconvenient aspects of reality, Fassbinder intervenes as an author and introduces a multitude of voices in order to lay open what has been

swept under the carpet. In fact, in order to rectify the rather deceptive verbal interaction of the characters, the director takes recourse to the assembled character of the novelist's original and effectively extends the series' audible space in two directions. On the one hand Fassbinder extends the audible space in the direction of the protagonist's subjective reality. As he thus not only gives voice to his interior monologue, but also to the author's multiple attempts at giving advice to his character, Biberkopf's inner confusion becomes more than evident for the viewer. On the other hand the series' audible space is extended in the direction of a more comprehensive view of the social reality of the big city. This extension is made up of a multitude of voices, mainly news reports, as they can be encountered in the complex life of the big city. As Fassbinder's use of language thus goes well beyond character language, he undercuts the rather cosy unanimity of the people living in the vicinity of the Alexanderplatz in a twofold way.

As the introduction of a multitude of different voices undermines the unanimity of the characters' verbal interaction, the extension of the audible space brings out the characters' attempts at covering up inconvenient truths. For as the assembled pieces of audible information go far beyond that portion of language, which is, by and large, identical with the characters' environment, they give access to those factors, which question the generally positive verbal interaction of the characters. The shady side of psychological and social reality comes to the fore and in doing so renders obvious that the characters are not as much in control of their lives and their environment as the positive appearance of the verbal interaction would have the viewer believe. Instead, as the assembled pieces of language and sound tell of various forms of accidents, mishaps and emotional repression, the characters quite obviously take a considerable amount of linguistic repression upon themselves in order to manage their social lives. Thus, the characters' considerable effort to stay on top of the social communication in their own environment turns them into objects of a social and psychological discourse from which they cannot escape.

The artistic rendition of the undercutting of the characters' verbal complicity with their situation is very much determined by Fassbinder's implementation of media interplay. Four different devices, which have been transposed from the other

media of theatre and cinema, can be distinguished. Firstly, there is the characters' own use of language whose dialectal flavour is reminiscent of the director's early predilection for the plays in the tradition of the German folk play. Secondly, there is the assemblage of all those texts and noises which are employed in such an ambiguous way that they can, although they are part of the series' diegetic reality, be related to the characters' subjective reality. The few instances of interior monologue may, although there is no ambiguity in these cases, be subsumed under this kind of sound montage. Next, there is Fassbinder's own voice which, very much like in *Fontane Effi Briest*, relies on the novelist's original text in order to comment on both the characters' subjective and objective reality in the shape of voice-over narration. Finally, there is the director's particular use of music, which is, following the classical Hollywood tradition, based on certain musical themes, which are attached to the appearance of certain characters on the screen.

Unlike in *Eight Hours Are Not a Day*, the characters in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* do not use the High German standard form of the German language, but make use of the Berlin dialect. This use of dialect language is by no means very strong; there is no need to be a Berliner to understand what the characters say and even a foreign speaker of German should be able to understand the verbal interaction between the characters without much difficulty. However, there is nonetheless a distinct flavour to the characters' and Biberkopf's use of language in particular, which makes it easy for any native speaker to locate it on the linguistic map of Germany. That this inflection of character language is no accident but the result of artistic deliberation is emphasised in the series by the fact that Fassbinder does not hesitate to remain faithful to the novel and portray Reinhold as a stutterer. As the implementation of character language in the series thus not only bears the marks of the location, but also indicates the emotional repression from which the characters suffer, it is aimed at characterising the characters as typical representatives of the social environment they live in.

This kind of character language clearly exceeds the representational conventions of television drama. For as Russell has pointed out in his article *A World in Inaction*, the use of language in television drama is such that '[e]ven the least

inarticulate would have no problem in forming perfect sentences'.[89] Instead, the use of language as we find it in Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* appears to find itself in the tradition of the German folk play as it had been celebrated by the director during the early years of his artistic career. However, there is one important difference between the use of language in *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now* or *Katzelmacher*, for example, and the use of language in the television series. For whereas in the early works dialect or accent are used in a highly artificial way in order to convey the characters' self-alienation, in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* dialect language serves to highlight the characters' fundamental agreement and complicity with their social environment. As inflected language is thus used in a rather naturalistic way, Fassbinder abides by television's basic need for a fundamental agreement between visual and audible information at the expense of linguistic clarity, i.e. in a rather filmic way.

As the verbal interaction of the characters is largely identical with the environment within which it occurs, the assemblage of different kinds of texts and noises onto the soundtrack provide a first opportunity for the viewer to go beyond the mere surface of things. A first kind of sound montage is described by the externalisation of the protagonist's interior monologue. It is in particular in the first part of the series that this kind of sound montage is employed. The psychological strain that Biberkopf experiences during his unsuccessful encounter with the prostitute Paula as well as the political confrontation with left-wing workers is thus made apparent. Another kind of sound montage is constituted by the various radio texts which, although they occur within the diegesis, appear to comment upon it. When a confused Biberkopf is approached by Nachum in the first part of the series, an off-screen radio sound announces an 'opportunity'. Similarly, when Biberkopf rejects Eva's and Herbert's offer of friendship, a long advertisement on the radio concedes '... in any case, the decision is yours'. Fassbinder also uses historic sound documents in order to comment on the protagonist's behaviour. When Biberkopf defends his newly acquired anarchistic standpoint against Eva's and Herbert's reservations at the end of the ninth episode, a Goebbels speech in the background

[89] Russell, 'A World in Inaction', p. 176.

may raise doubts about his conviction. Finally, Fassbinder uses different kinds of noises in order to convey the subjective perception of the characters. In the series' first part alone, the sound of a car engine accompanies Biberkopf's decision to leave Paula, the ticking of a stop watch is assembled when Biberkopf is reluctant to leave Minna after the rape, the sound of dripping water leads up to his vow to become a decent man, and the barking of a dog can be heard when he receives a letter from the local authorities, denying him the right to stay in Berlin.

The use of sound montage is, as has been pointed out in the context of the cinema film *In a Year with 13 Moons*, indebted to the aesthetic influence of television's journalistic ways of conveyance. However, the specific forms of sound montage used in the television series are highly reminiscent of those forms employed in the director's cinema films of the second half of the 1970s. While the use of sound montage as a means to convey the main character's interior monologue has already been encountered and explored in the 1978 film *In a Year with 13 Moons*, the implementation of diegetic sounds for the sake of commentary was first made use of the 1976 film *Chinese Roulette* in which Gabriel's presentation of a lengthy philosophical text appears to be summed up and thus commented upon by the announcement of the weekly lottery draw: 'Und hier noch einmal das Ergebnis...' The use of historic sound documents for this purpose, however, is more in line with the kind of sound montage which Fassbinder developed in *The Marriage of Maria Braun* in which various radio announcements and speeches are assembled onto the soundtrack in order to make Maria's actions understandable within the historical context of post-war Germany. Finally, also the application of different kinds of noises for the sake of the conveyance of the characters' subjective experience finds its model in the director's most successful film. For just like the use of different noises in the series, the extensive use of the sound of pneumatic hammers in the cinema film can be understood on the level of plain naturalism as well as an indication of the protagonist's increasing emotional frustration. As sound montage in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* thus draws on the director's own cinema practice, the series' use of sound is a vehicle for the cinematically differentiated forms of television's own aesthetic device to return into television.

As the use of sound montage brings into the open what the verbal interaction does not readily reveal, it is Fassbinder's own voice-over narration, which imposes itself upon the characters' use of language. Most of these text passages are direct transpositions from Döblin's novel and thus represent one of the closest links between Döblin's montage of city life and Fassbinder's melodramatic adaptation. The narrator tells of the ongoing construction works on the Alexanderplatz, presents the statistics of the cattle slaughtered in Berlin's abattoirs, reads out news reports about accidents that have occurred or summarises some political events of the day. However, although Fassbinder's voice-over narration is one of the most important means used in the series to place the characters' interaction in the context of the big city, it is also used to comment upon Biberkopf's behaviour and attitude. There are biblical references which parallel Biberkopf's situation, questions and admonitions put to the protagonist, and time and again Biberkopf as well as the viewer are reminded of the looming reaper called death. On the basis of such voice-over narration, which is mostly spoken with a rather melancholic voice, Fassbinder subjects the characters to the truth of their own lives.

Just like the different forms of sound montage, Fassbinder's voice-over narration is not unprecedented in his work. In fact, it is known from one of his early cinema adaptations: the 1974 production of *Fontane Effi Briest*. Just like in the series, voice-over narration is here employed in order to transpose entire passages from the novel into the adaptation and thus subject the characters' interaction to an authorial voice. Moreover, in both cases it is Fassbinder himself who reproduces the selected extracts from the novel in a mellow tone, only occasionally adding a comment of his own. Finally, in both works the interaction of the characters is repeatedly brought to a halt in order to draw full attention to the voice-over on the soundtrack. Consequently, the way in which Fassbinder employs voice-over narration in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* works according to the principles that had been developed in the context of *Fontane Effi Briest*. Obviously, Fassbinder first 'tried them out' in the more experimental realm of the cinema before he implemented them in the medium of television. Thus, the implementation of voice-over narration in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* shows once more that the use of language in the series is based

on the transposition of aesthetic devices which the director developed in his own cinema films.

As sound montage and voice-over narration thus combine forces to convey what the characters are not able to express in their own words, their individuality finds expression on a fourth level of the series' soundtrack: the use of music. For as Achim Haag points out in his book *Deine Sehnsucht kann keiner stillen*, music in the series is predominantly applied as leitmotifs, which are attached to the visual appearance of the main characters on the screen. As Fassbinder's composer Peer Raben has pointed out himself, music serves as a 'Erweiterung der psychologischen Zeichnung der Figuren; vor allem da, wo sie nicht mehr den Regeln des normalen Verhaltens folgen'.[90] In the cases of Biberkopf and Mieze these 'psychological sketches' may be subject to variation according to the characters' momentary states of mind, whilst Reinhold is ascribed two different tunes whose invariability conveys the persistent split between the suffering and the malice of his character. Consequently, as language largely fails to endow the characters with any sense of individuality, music assumes this function. However, in keeping with the nature of music the conveyance of individual traits does not take place on the level of conscious rationality, but on the level of emotions.

This method of attaching musical themes to the characters is, as Haag points out himself, indebted to the use of music as it was developed in the context of the classical Hollywood cinema. Quoting Hansjörg Paul, Haag refers to Max Steiner, one of Hollywood's pioneers in the field of developing musical scores for the early sound films of the 1930s, in order to substantiate his assessment:

> Max Steiner ordnete den Protagonisten seiner Filme bestimmte, sie charakterisierende thematische Gestalten zu und übertrug die Beziehungen zwischen den Protagonisten in Beziehungen zwischen den thematischen Gestalten.[91]

That Raben indeed intended to follow this tradition is indicated by his statement that the use of music in a film has to make up for the lack of reality of the actor's image on the screen:

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[90] Haag, *Deine Sehnsucht kann keiner stillen*, p. 168.
[91] Ibid., p. 166.

> Der Filmschauspieler [...] ist eine fantasierte Figur, und die Musik muß viel näher bei dieser Person stehen, als bei realistisch vorhandenen Theatermenschen. Man muß Musik komponieren, die mit dem Charakter und den Gedanken dieser Figur zu tun hat.[92]

The parallelism between the two statements makes it clear that it is the implementation of a filmic way of using music, which enables Fassbinder to endow the characters of his television series with an element of individuality.

As the implementation of language and sound in the series is based on techniques which were partly developed in the director's own theatre and cinema work and partly borrowed from the classical Hollywood tradition, it is by means of media interplay that Fassbinder externalises the characters' internalisation of the social other. For as the use of dialect and speech impediments, the various means of sound montage and Fassbinder's voice-over narration make it clear that verbal interaction in the series suppresses the characters' social and interior reality to the extent that only the non-verbal form of music is able to save the characters from a complete loss of individuality, all the different linguistic and sonic means are geared towards the externalisation of that silence which the characters impose upon themselves. All this being achieved by artistic devices which have been transposed form media other than television, the use of language in the series follows the series' structure and acting style in that it complies with the overall artistic principle of two corresponding structures of the 'one within the other'. Just as the use of language and sound betrays the signs of a socially determined silence and conformity, it is itself informed by artistic means, which have been transposed from theatre and film.

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[92] Ibid.

## IV.3.5 The Use of Filmic Devices in the Deconstruction of the Image Flow's Continuity

The composition and flow of the images in Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* are marked by a considerable degree of unity in their attempt to portray life in the big city. Whereas in the original novel the splinters of city life are assembled to cover at least as much of the plot as the movements of the protagonist himself, Fassbinder, faithful to his credo to portray the characters in the places of refuge which they have created for themselves in order to hide from the reality of the big city,[93] cuts the scale of the multi-layered versatility of urban phenomena to a humanly manageable size: the director concentrates on one particular, rather closed area within the city in which the odd car is virtually the only indication of the characters' subjection to a confusing urban reality dominated by mechanisation. As the series' images thus ignore a large part of what is constitutive for life in the big city, their sequence and flow by and large follow the rather conventional pattern of character interaction. Consequently, the composition and the sequence of the images are marked by a considerable sense of continuity which finds itself in opposition to the aesthetics of the original novel.

Having said that, there is still a considerable degree of discontinuity to be found in the series. However, this discontinuity is not brought about by the disintegration of urban reality but by the director's own discursive interference. This interference works on two levels. On the one hand Fassbinder interferes with the characters' interaction in order to convey the gradual disintegration of Biberkopf's personality. For this purpose the flow of the interaction is not only repeatedly interrupted by yet another flashback to the protagonist's manslaughter of his former girlfriend Minna or other scenes or arrangements signifying the protagonist's state of mind, but also by intertitles which explain Biberkopf's emotions and subjective experience. On the other hand it is the broadening of the series' scope in the direction of urban reality which undercuts the continuity of the interaction. Intertiles are used for this purpose just as much as Biberkopf's repeated visits to the 'Great Whore of Babylon' or references to the municipal abattoir. As Fassbinder thus time and again

[93] Fassbinder, *Die Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 149.

interrupts what Achim Haag has called the narrative-explicative thread in order to pierce it analytically,[94] there is a considerable degree of discontinuity in the flow of the series' images.

While the intercutting of shots and sequences for the sake of analysis undermines the continuity of the characters' interaction, the discontinuity in the flow of the images brings out the unity of the diegetic world. For as the intercutting of shots and sequences repeatedly reminds the viewer of the various undercurrents in the interaction of the characters, they not only kind of moor the various parts together, but also link them up with the epilogue of the series. For it is here, in the epilogue, that Biberkopf's increasing mental instability, which was merely indicated in the preceding 13 parts, comes to the fore and makes its aesthetics so much different from the rest of the series: the montage of shots and sequences in the epilogue continuously oscillates between reality and Biberkopf's traumatic visions. As the intercutting of shots and sequences thus brings out the insanity which results from the unresolved antagonism between Biberkopf's claim of moral autonomy and the amoral reality of the city, discontinuity in the flow of the images endows the series with a sense of unity and even closure which is, as it counteracts the episodic character of the series, much more common in the cinema than in television.[95]

In order to give his series unity and closure Fassbinder not only draws extensively on those techniques and devices which he himself developed in his work for the cinema, but also harks back on the arsenal of forms which has emerged during the almost one hundred years of the history of the cinema. Firstly, there is the extensive use of highly conventional continuity devices such as the shot / reverse shot as it was developed by the classical Hollywood cinema. Secondly, as the filmmaker seeks to pierce the characters' interaction analytically, he makes use of a montage technique which is rather reminiscent of the montage theories of the final years of the silent cinema. Thirdly, the use of intertitles, too, is, although known from

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[94] Haag, *Deine Sehnsucht kann keiner stillen*, p. 193.

[95] The impression of unity as a result of the series' complicated visual structure may provide another reason why the series largely failed to meet viewer expectations. For as Werner Faulstich has noted, '[w]as sich als Serie anpreist, hat gefälligst so weit entspezifisiert zu sein, daß praktisch, im Uerhaltungscharakter, beliebig von einem zum anderen Programm umgeschaltet werden kann. – Faulstich, *Ästhetik des Fernsehens*, p. 45.

Fassbinder's own cinema film *Fontane Effi Briest* (1974), indebted to the methods which the silent cinema developed in order to develop a language in the absence of language proper. Finally, as the different means of montage thus reveal the delusive nature of the images depicting the characters' interaction, some of the characters' subjective experience is conveyed by the fact that Fassbinder, again drawing on the tradition of the classical Hollywood cinema, returned to a studio in order to shoot the series. Consequently, as the techniques of the silent as well as the classical Hollywood cinema are thus at the heart of series' image flow, it is clearly based on media interplay.

Continuity within the diegesis is predominantly conveyed by a kind of camera work and an editing technique, which goes along with the characters' interaction. Fassbinder sticks to the opposition between the use of long takes in which the characters are framed together and the implementation of shot / reverse shots. As the framing together of the characters often goes hand in hand with medium long or long shots, it not only conveys the sense of togetherness among them, but also gives Biberkopf the opportunity to emotionally 'expand'. The implementation of shot / reverse shots on the other hand is usually combined with the use of close-ups so that the irritation and/or excitement of conflict situations mixes with the conveyance of the characters' personal concern. Otherwise, Fassbinder employs a whole range of camera movements and angles to appropriately represent the characters' interaction and movements. There is an abundance of travelling shots, panning and tilting in the series. Although sudden changes in its position may occasionally lead the viewer to question the camera's perspective, character movement remains the decisive criterion for the editing as well as any camera movement and positioning.

This kind of camera work and editing technique is familiar from Fassbinder's own cinema melodramas. However, in order to use it in the medium of television, the filmmaker applies some modifications, which bring it in line with the representational conventions of the mass medium. Surely, the zoom is by far less often applied in the first series *Eight Hours Are Not a Day*, but the frequency with which Fassbinder employs close-ups and medium close-ups makes it obvious that he does take the technical conditions of television into account. In fact, in his statistical analysis of

part one, Achim Haag has shown that the close-up is the dominant image size in the series:

> In *Berlin Alexanderplatz* haben die dichten Einstellungsgrößen Nah und Groß (...) gegenüber den offenen Einstellungen (...) deutliches Übergewicht. Die statistische Auswertung der ersten Folge ('Die Strafe beginnt') ergibt ein Verhältnis von 2:1. Den 175 Nah- und 24 Großeinstellungen stehen 59 amerikanische, 33 halbnahe, 3 halbtotale und 11 totale Einstellungen gegenüber, also 199:106.[96]

About two thirds of all the frames of the first episode are constituted either by close-ups or medium close-ups, i.e. a frame size which is best suited for the shooting of talking heads. Thus, in order to transpose the visual language he developed in the cinema, Fassbinder's camera focuses on the place of language articulation and in doing so complies with the rules of televisual representation, which rate language higher than imagery.

As the representation of the characters' interaction is marked by a considerable degree of continuity, it is repeatedly undercut by an assemblage of images, which shows what the protagonist represses in order to sustain it. The most prominent of these shots and sequences is the flashback showing the event, which may be taken as the starting point of Biberkopf's troubles: the manslaughter of his lover Ida. This sequence appears five times in the series; it is shown in part one, seven, eight, twice in part nine and for a last time in the thirteenth episode of the series. Another montage item, which is assembled, consists of only one shot, which shows Biberkopf as a prisoner in his prison cell. This shot appears twice in the entire series. Moreover, Biberkopf's vision of the 'moving and sliding roofs', which Fassbinder introduces in part one by neglecting the 180 degree rule, is repeated in part two. Photographs of a slaughter house and the sequence 'Abattoir' are intercut and in part ten the characters' interaction is interrupted by the image of a spider running across a couple of slaughtered and naked puppets. Finally, in part seven, eight and nine Biberkopf pays three visits to the 'Great Whore of Babylon', which are, although they occur within the diegesis, in line with the assembled images' common theme of violence, death and insanity.

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[96] Ibid., p. 145.

As the assembled shots and sequences thus constitute a logical counterpoint to the characters' interaction, they, rather than conveying the protagonist's 'internally subjective flashbacks' or visions in a rather classical manner as Jane Shattuc has suggested,[97] appear to draw on a technique which the early cinema developed in order to develop a visual language which would be able to work in the absence of language proper: montage. However, as this happens in the shape of motif chains, the assembled images form a grid-like structure, which is laid across the flow of the interaction. Thus the assembled images actually parallel on a higher level what is ultimately television programming's effect on the unity of traditional art works in general. For as Knut Hickethier has observed, the flow of the programming is prone to dissolve the unity of art works broadcast on television:

> So überholt ... nun im Fernsehen die mediale Struktur die im Fernsehen vermittelte Kunst, transzendiert ihren singulären Charakter, indem sie daraus einen Teil des Progammflusses macht, in dem sie die Kunstwerke, die im Programmfluß sich vermitteln wollen, einspinnt, kokonartig, diese auch inwendig zersetzt.[98]

Consequently, as the endeavour to provide the interaction of the characters with a counterpoint results in the use of film's montage technique, the various motif chains thus constituted bring the flow of the series' images in line with television's representational conventions.

Since the undercutting of the characters' interaction lays open its fragility, it is again an authorial voice that imposes itself in order to correct the conveyed images. For this purpose Fassbinder introduces the technique of inserting intertitles in between the flow of the character interaction. These intertitles, just like Fassbinder's voice-overs, mainly represent extracts from Döblin's novel or may occasionally be used by the director to add a comment of his own. On this basis the intertitles supply pieces of information which can often not be derived from the characters interaction: they either comment on or question the images and thus provide additional information to put the character of Biberkopf and his social

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[97] Shattuc, *Television, Tabloids and Tears*, p. 147.

[98] Knut Hickethier, 'Fernsehästhetik', in *Film, Fernsehen, Video und die Künste: Strategien der Intermedialität*, ed. by Joachim Paech (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 1994), pp. 199-200.

intercourse into a broader context. In doing so, Fassbinder's introduction of intertitles covers an aspect for which the original novel is famous: the continuous intercutting of different aspects of the big city scenario with the destiny of one of its inhabitants. However, unlike conventional intertitles, which mostly present the writing on the screen in white letters on a black background, Fassbinder's intertitles are preceded by a fade into white so that the writing appears in black letters on a white background.

The use of writing on the screen is not only known as typical of the aesthetics of the early, silent cinema, but also of television, which makes extensive use of it for its journalistic purposes. However, the particular form and shape which Fassbinder gives the intertitles in his series invites yet another parallel to be drawn. For it is in one of his own cinema films, the 1974 film *Fontane Effi Briest*, that the director developed and first implemented intertitles in the way he uses them in his second major television series. In an interview about this cinema film Fassbinder explains the function of the combination of white fades and intertitles:

> Schwarzblenden sind ja meistens Gefühls- oder Zeitblenden. Weißblenden dagegen sind Wachmacher, denn allein durch das Weiß, das dann da ist, erschrickt man ein bißchen, kriegt einen kleinen Schock und bleibt wach, nicht in dem Sinne, daß man eingeschlafen wäre, sondern wach im Verstand.[99]

As the intertitles in the series are thus implemented in a way which was developed in the cinema in order to draw more attention to them, it is via the director's own cinema practice that the television-inspired revival of the early cinema's technique finds its way back into television.

As the flow of the characters interaction is thus repeatedly interrupted by the assembled images and intertitles, it is the observation of spatial continuity in the series which upholds the continuity of the characters' subjective experience. For as Fassbinder concentrates on one rather closed area within the city, he gives the series' use of space the impression that it is always already known, a fact which makes the various settings appear as slightly oppressive and rather boring. On the one hand there appears to be no fundamental difference between indoor and outdoor spaces;

[99] Fassbinder, *Die Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 55.

virtually all settings convey the intimate atmosphere of indoor settings.[100] On the other hand there are certain locations which reoccur persistently. Especially Biberkopf's room at Frau Bast's apartment and the local pub provide the series' dramaturgy with resting points. Although Fassbinder pays a lot of attention to naturalistic detail, most of these spaces are photographed using low-key lighting, a strategy which allows the director to implement various light effects such as flashing lights in order to convey the characters' subjective experiences. Consequently, the rather stuffy atmosphere, which the high degree of spatial continuity brings about, conveys its inhabitants' collective experience of slightly oppressive togetherness and boredom.

Fassbinder's use of spatial continuity relies on a material means, which was most extensively used by the cinema of the classical period of the 1940s and 50s: the studio. The series was not shot on location in Berlin, but by making use of the so-called *Berliner Straße* at the Bavaria Film Studios near Munich.[101] The use of these studios, which had been bought up by the German television stations SDR and WDR by the end of the 1970s, enables Fassbinder to translate a strategy into television that had previously been developed for the cinema. For just like the staginess of the rooms in his cinema films, the studio settings give the interaction of the characters a distinct theatrical quality. In fact, the equivalent of a room that appears to have been turned into a stage is a city represented as a studio. The filmmaker uses the theatricality which studio sets are bound to invoke in order to explore the inward realm of the community. Consequently, when he succeeds in using the studio's spatial continuity in order to purport the sense of oppressive boredom and togetherness among his characters, then this is mainly due to the employment of a material means which television inherited from the old film industry.

As the composition and the flow of the images are thus based on the use of

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[100] Photography of open landscapes is extremely rare in the series. However, there are a few scenes which are taken outside: this is, for example, the case when Biberkopf and Mieze start their loving relationship: Biberkopf rows Mieze across a lake in an open landscape, thus providing a brief glimpse of another world of freedom and happiness. By contrast, when Mieze returns to the same place with Reinhold towards the end of part twelve, the forest is permeated by artificial fog so that the open landscape is reduced to the dimensions of an enclosed room.

[101] This studio site 'had been specially constructed in 1976 for the Swedish director Ingmar Bergman's international production *The Serpent's Egg*'. - Blaney, *Symbiosis or Confrontation?*, p. 323.

artistic devices which the silent cinema and the classical Hollywood cinema developed before Fassbinder revived them for his own purposes in his cinema films, it is by means of media interplay that the filmmaker externalises the characters' internalisation of the social other. For as the continuity in the camera work and editing technique conveys the continuity of life in Berlin's proletarian quarters, the disruption caused by the assemblage of shots and sequences as well as the use of intertitles purport what is repressed in order to maintain it, and the spatial continuity of the studio settings externalises the characters' sense of boredom and togetherness, all of these devices contribute to the conveyance of the unity and closure which results from the restrictions proper to life in this environment. The externalisation of the social conditions' effect on the characters being thus effected by means which have been identified as transposed from the cinema, the composition and flow of the images in Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* abides by the same stylistic principle which is characteristic of his entire artistic work: the internalisation of the other on the thematic and formal levels.

In conclusion, it can be stated that Fassbinder's adaptation of Alfred Döblin's novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* clearly departs from the aesthetic approach which Fassbinder devised for the production of his first major television series, *Eight Hours Are Not a Day*. Although *Berlin Alexanderplatz* equally follows the melodramatic pattern, a fact which is, against the background of the original novel, actually more conspicuous than in the 1972 series, it is marked by an aesthetic approach which is more in tune with the Artaud-inspired cinema films he made in the second half of the 1970s. This is not only due to the fact that the television series rests on the problematisation of identity, makes violence a key issue and, especially in the epilogue, creates a confusing and disturbing whirl of images, but also to the implementation of a wide range of aesthetic means which were first used in the cinema and whose concentration in the series makes *Berlin Alexanderplatz* appear like a summary of Fassbinder's aesthetics. The far-reaching and varied implementation of sound montage, the use of intertitles and assembled images, the slow acting style and a narrative structure which Klotz has defined for the theatre as open - all these devices had first been used by the director in the cinema before they

were transposed into television. Consequently, the aesthetics of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* clearly mirrors the turn-around in the director's attitude in relation to the projected aesthetic interaction between cinema and television: it is now the aesthetics of his cinema films which provides the starting point for the aesthetic rendition of his television work.

The fact that *Berlin Alexanderplatz* indeed assumes a position which, as Jane Shattuc has put it, synthesises the aesthetics of the two institutional genres in Fassbinder's work is echoed by the television officials' difficulties with finding the right time slots for the individual episodes of the series. In fact, the series was repeatedly re-scheduled and eventually taken off the projected time slot at 20.15. That this decision was indeed due to the series' aesthetic peculiarities becomes clear as soon as one considers a statement by Gunther Witte, at the time head of one of the 'Fernsehspiel' sections at the WDR, which reveals the view 'that a 20.15 start would have necessitated a number of cuts to certain scenes'.[102] Eventually, only the first part was screened at a time that can still be considered prime time (21.05); the following 12 episodes were shown at 21.30 and the epilogue at 23.00, a time slot, which is normally reserved for the late-night movie. Thus television responded to the more radical aesthetics of the series in its own way, a way which effectively turns degrees of aesthetic radicalism into a matter of time slots. Obviously, television officials not only sensed the gap between the series' aesthetic approach and what may be considered good prime time television, but also responded to the aesthetic differences within the series.

[102] Blaney, *Symbiosis or Confrontation?*, p. 326.

# Part V

# Conclusion:
# Fassbinder's Aesthetics of Media Interplay

In order to realise his project of using art as a medium for the conveyance of his personal experiences and concerns, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, for the longest time of his artistic career, worked for the three media of theatre, cinema and television simultaneously. However, the relationship between his work for the three media is not necessarily marked by the kind of equality, which the term suggests. For as the director's prime interest lay and always remained with the cinema and its artistic possibilities, the work carried out for the other two media appears to assume almost auxiliary positions: whilst his involvement with the Munich *Action Theater* and later *antiteater* provided him not only with the material and personal support, but also with the necessary artistic experience, television's contribution to the furthering of Fassbinder's artistic project mainly consists in reliable financial backing and the possibility to address a wide audience. On the basis of such support the director set out to create a highly personal innovative, versatile and extensive body of work and set it against the dominant forces in the field of the audio-visual culture, Hollywood cinema and broadcast television.

However, Fassbinder not only worked simultaneously for theatre, cinema and television in order to establish a firm basis for his ambitions in the cinema, but also in order to take advantage of the experimental possibilities which such parallel work for three different media has on offer. Besides the repeated adaptation of his own works for a different medium as exemplified by *Katzelmacher* and the reflection on the nature of the in each case other medium such as the consideration of film production in the early play *Just One Slice of Bread* and the depiction of television's all-pervasive power in the cinema film *In a Year with 13 Moons* it is above all the idea of the aesthetic interplay of the media which was to become the main area of experimentation. As the analysis of a selection of his works has shown, the transposition of aesthetic means from one medium to the other is a hallmark of Fassbinder's aesthetic approach. As the director envisaged the aesthetic interaction between the media as reciprocal, two directions in the exchange of aesthetic devices can be identified: on the one hand the director carries artistic means from the historically younger media into the older ones and on the other hand he transposed means and devices from the older media into the younger ones.

Right from the beginning of his artistic practice Fassbinder deliberately took advantage of the possibility of transposing the younger media's aesthetic devices into the older ones. Indeed, the fact that the aesthetics of Fassbinder's early plays are strongly influenced by the filmic technique of montage is just as much the outcome of artistic deliberation as the fact that the cinema melodramas made from 1972 onwards were influenced by the insights which he had gained from the television production of *Eight Hours Are Not a Day*. However, while Fassbinder thus sought to benefit from his simultaneous work in the three different media, the analysis of his works has shown that the new media's aesthetic influence on his work for the older media clearly exceeds the framework which the director set himself for his own experimentation. More often than not the non-theatrical elements in his work for the theatre invite a reference to television than to film aesthetics; likewise the director's turn towards a more dramatic form of representation in the theatre took place under the impression of the director's discovery of Douglas Sirk's classical Hollywood melodramas and television's influence on the director's cinema aesthetics set in well before the production of the first major television series. Thus, although Fassbinder was keen to have the new media exercise an aesthetic impact on his work for the older ones, this impact appears to have gone well beyond what the director envisaged himself.

As Fassbinder thus transposes aesthetic means from the historically younger media into the older ones on a large scale, it is equally true that a large number of the older media's devices find their way into his work for the younger media. The transposition of aesthetic devices in this direction, too, is carried out intentionally; Fassbinder himself pointed to the theatrical qualities of his early films and the filmic qualities of his late work for television. However, the director's statements restrict the transposition of the older media's devices into his work for the younger ones to certain periods in his artistic career, whilst the analyses of his works have not only provided clear evidence that the transposition of theatrical devices remained a cornerstone of his film aesthetics throughout his artistic career, but also that elements of his film aesthetics found entry into his work for television well before the production of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. Thus, no matter in which way Fassbinder set

the framework for their application during the different phases of his artistic career, his entire work for cinema and television thrives on the transposition of artistic devices from the in each case older media. Having said that, it has equally to be pointed out that many of the older media's transposed devices were actually developed in response to the modern media's own aesthetic forms so that it is often the new media's own devices which return to their original medium in a theatrical or filmic shape.

As Fassbinder's transposition of theatrical means into his work for cinema and television, his use of cinematic devices in his work for the theatre and television and the implementation of televisual means in his work for theatre and cinema thus exceed by far what the director himself envisaged, his style is very much in line with what Marshall McLuhan has termed 'hybrid'. As McLuhan explains, such a hybrid aesthetics releases what he calls 'hybrid energy' which, in turn, overheats the respective media. As the theorist distinguishes the hot media from the cool ones on the basis of a higher degree of definition and a lower degree of audience participation,[1] the overheating of a medium ultimately means that the artistic representation in question is over-determined. According to McLuhan, such over-determination through media interplay is the origin and source of new aesthetic forms: '[t]he hybrid or the meeting of two media is a moment of truth and revelation from which new form is born'.[2] As '[o]ne of the most common causes of breaks in any system is [indeed] the cross-fertilisation with another system',[3] Fassbinder breaks with the respective media's conventional forms of representation and thus creates a new paradigm of forms.

As the analyses of Fassbinder's plays, films and television series have repeatedly confirmed, the hybrid in his formal language finds its reference point in the hybrid characteristics of his characters. Proceeding from his personal experiences and his knowledge of human nature, Fassbinder implements the transposed aesthetic means and devices to expose the characters' internalisation of social patterns of behaviour, values and standards. This correspondence between two structures of

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[1] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media, the Extensions of Man* (London, New York: ARK Paperbacks, 1964), p. 319.
[2] Ibid., p. 55.
[3] Ibid., p. 39.

internalisation on the work's formal and thematic levels, which has been found on every level of his aesthetic renditions, is not a matter of chance. Citing the Chinese book of wisdom *The Way and its Power*, McLuhan points out that it is the hybrid disposition in human nature, whose origin Fassbinder finds in the intersection of the personal and the social, which brings about the energy which is at the root of cross-media fertilisation. Consequently, it is the focus on the question of the psychological internalisation of the social other, which incites the director to employ the media of theatre, cinema and television as 'active metaphors in their power to translate experience into new forms'.[4]

As Fassbinder makes use of the stylistic principle of the correspondence between two structures of internalisation in his entire work, it is also true that he, in order to realise it in the three different media contexts, differentiates between his theatre, cinema and television aesthetics. For as the director aspires to convey the same message in all the three media, he is well aware that what goes for the theatre does not achieve the same effect in the cinema or television and vice versa. As Fassbinder thus takes the different framework conditions in each medium into account, he, instead of just blending the media into one another, observes the principle of aesthetic equivalence. The director not only sets the generic framework in different ways, but also selects different sets of transposed devices, modifies their form and changes their function. In doing so, Fassbinder never considered his approaches to the theatre, cinema or television as something that was beyond change and development. As Fassbinder kept searching for yet more effective ways to bring his message across, the succession of the different aesthetic periods in his work for theatre, film and television rarely coincide and thus again highlight the relative autonomy of his work for the different media.

In order to convey his message of the exploitation of feelings in the theatre Fassbinder transposes filmic and televisual means to the effect that the defining characteristic of theatrical representation, the 'here and now' of the events depicted on the stage, is used only to be subverted on a large scale. Whilst in the early plays the filmic technique of montage, the modern media's more casual approach to

[4] Ibid., p. 57.

language use and the technical media's power to manipulate time and space are used to convey the reproductive nature of human actions, the later plays seemingly revert to a more dramatic form of theatre. However, as the unity of the dramatic action is partially reinstated only to be collapsed by the oscillating identities of the characters, theatre's sign system and indeed the dramatic text itself, the later plays move towards an aesthetics of simulation in which the earlier montage aesthetics is transformed into an aesthetics of complete imitation, thus equally forestalling any sense of 'here and now'. As this is likewise achieved by means which have been transposed from the modern media of film and television, Fassbinder secures the conveyance of his message in the theatre by using the possibilities offered by media interplay in order to make appear absent what is actually present on the stage.

Seeking artistically to render the social and self-alienation of his characters in his work for the cinema, Fassbinder uses the aesthetic possibilities offered by media interplay in such a way that they create a powerful sense of present just in order for it to be shown as lost. Whilst in the early films this is effected by means of a rather ritualistic structure, an extremely slow editing rhythm and acting style as well as a very artificial use of language, i.e. means and devices which emerged form the *antiteater*'s performance style, in the Sirk-inspired films of the first half of the 1970s the theatricality of the early films is developed further within the generic framework of melodrama and supplemented by theatrical and televisual means such as a complementary plot construction, stagy interaction, the emphasis on the characters' silence and visual codes which emphasis the melodramatic perspective. Finally, in the radical cinema films of the late 1970s Fassbinder includes theatrical and televisual devices such as sound montage, voice inflection and the excessive use of props which give his films' theatricality such a sharp edge that it approximates Artaud's ideal of an aesthetics of cruelty and disturbance. Thus, no matter which period of the director's cinema work is considered, the possibilities of media interplay are used to emphasise the characters' sense of a lost present which, in turn, is fundamentally in line with the 'having-been' of cinematic representation.

While in the cinema the characters' internalisation of social standards is conveyed by highlighting the true nature of the medium's representations, in the

aesthetically rather moderate and otherwise more journalistic space of television, the internalisation of the social other is, rather in line with the conventional form of filmic and televisual narration, purported by transposed devices which emphasise the will to create a meaningful present. Particularly the aesthetics of Fassbinder's first major television series leaves no doubt about the fact that the transposition and modification of various elements of the director's theatre and film aesthetics is aimed at giving the internalisation of social values a positive twist and lend a powerful presence to characters who are actually absent. But also the far-reaching transposition of the director's cinema aesthetics into his second major television series is, insofar as it is used to convey the characters' will to 'get on with it' and 'make the best of what is available', aimed at creating a sense of a meaningful present. Thus, in television, the conveyance of the internalisation of social standards by means of media interplay conveys a sense of present which, on the whole, is in line with the medium's journalistic and aesthetically rather conventional characteristics.

As the interplay of the media outright works against the medium's defining characteristic of presence in the theatre, brings about a double negation of absence in the cinema, effectively bringing it back in line with the medium's representational conditions, and largely goes along with the conventional invocation of presence in the absence of the events depicted in television, Fassbinder's implementation of media interplay results in a differentiation between his works for the different media which appears to forestall any sense of unity in the macrostructure of the director's work. However, as the macrostructure of Fassbinder's work features many of those aesthetic elements which are identifiable as modifications of what is commonly known as the aesthetics of television soap operas, media interplay is also the force which reinstates it. For as the director's work is based on a recurrent topic, persistently makes use of the same actors and character types and also sticks to a chamber piece dramaturgy, the aesthetic interaction with the youngest of the three audio-visual media gives his work a degree of unity which not only makes up for the differentiation between the three media but also for the diversity of genres otherwise characteristic of the director's work.

As Fassbinder thus makes use of media interplay on a large scale, the 'truth'

and 'revelation', of which McLuhan speaks, requires and encourages new ways of perception of the social reality. Devices like the generally slow pace of the editing, the far-reaching lack of continuity devices, the elaborately choreographed acting, the different ways of distorting language - all these means induce a feeling of uneasiness which is well suited to incite the spectator to work out the relationships between the characters for himself. Thus, Fassbinder's use of media interplay is in line with what McLuhan points out about the effect of cross-fertilisation in general, namely that it

> holds us on the frontiers between forms that snap us out of the Narcissus-narcosis. The moment of the meeting of media is a moment of freedom and release from the ordinary trance and numbness imposed by them on our senses.[5]

Media interplay enables Fassbinder to position the audience in a way which is designed to incite them to have 'new' feelings and at the same time think about them, that is to have a 'new' experience. Emotions and rational activity are to work together to bring about the only realism which Fassbinder looks for, i.e. not the realism of the representation, but the realism of the spectator, a realism which sets dreams and utopias free as for what they are and thus makes people more resistant to being used and abused.[6] By thus raising critical awareness on the part of the audience, Fassbinder indeed made films, which, at some point, stop being films,[7] that is films, which intervene with the public discussions at the time.

This aesthetic approach to the audio-visual media puts Fassbinder's artistic project in the tradition of the European avant-garde of the 1920s. For it was in those days that artists like Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht discovered the possibilities which media interplay offers to everybody whose ambition it is to create new ways of perceiving reality on the part of the audience. In fact, Bertolt Brecht was among the first to observe the effect which the co-existence of old and new media has on the evolution of aesthetic representation and perception when he wrote about the relationship between literature and film in *The Threepenny Lawsuit*:

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[5] Ibid., p. 55.
[6] Fassbinder, *Anarchie der Phantasie*, p. 137.
[7] Ibid., p. 47.

> The old forms of communication are not unaffected by the development of new ones, nor do they survive alongside them. The filmgoer develops a different way of reading stories. But the man who writes the stories is a filmgoer too. The mechanisation of literary production cannot be thrown into reverse.[8]

The representational forms of the new media create a new sensibility not only on the part of those who consume works of art, but also among those who create art. Consequently, the co-existence of different media almost automatically sets off an exchange of aesthetic forms between them, a process which Fassbinder, as his own statements show, propels quite deliberately.

However, whilst Piscator's and Brecht's transposition of new, filmic means into the theatre is largely motivated by an enthusiasm for modern technology which, combined with a left-wing world view, echoes the at the time widespread belief that technological progress heralds social progress, Fassbinder turns this proposition upside down by using the transposition of aesthetic devices from one medium to the other in order to depict his characters' internalisation of the social other. The new media no longer herald a new world order; television is only allowed to take a privileged position insofar as it provides the basis for a macrostructure which arrests all the media concerned in a state of mutual aesthetic exchange. Thus, Fassbinder's use of media interplay has moved on to finds itself right in the middle of an aesthetic development which Bert O. States has characterised thus:

> Things are first interesting because they are new; then ... because they fit into an order or help to create a new order; finally they disappear into the order as one of the invisible building blocks out of which new images, and eventually new paradigms, are made.[9]

Fassbinder's media interplay 'fits into the new order' of the human inclination to internalise the values and standards of society, an inclination which may have been blamed by many as the main reason for the failure of the 1968 protest movement. Consequently, Fassbinder's implementation of media interplay mirrors Wilfried

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[8] *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. by John Willett (London: Methuen, 1990), p. 47.
[9] Bert O. States, *Great Reckonings*, p. 43.

Wiegand's characterisation of the director's work as post-revolutionary, i.e. as an œuvre '[das] nicht mehr den naiven vorrevolutionären Traum einer besseren Welt ansteuert, sondern die Gebrochenheit einer negativen geschichtlichen Erfahrung in sich aufgenommen hat'.[10]

[10] Wilfried Wiegand, 'Die Puppe in der Puppe: Beobachtungen zu Fassbinder's Filmen', in *Rainer Werner Fassbinder*, ed. by Peter W. Jansen and Wolfram Schütte (Frankfurt/ Main: Fischer, 1982), pp. 29-62 (p. 59).

# Filmography

The filmography contains exclusively those films which were directed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder. It is laid out according to the various phases of media interplay in his œuvre and is therefore not necessarily chronological. Fassbinder's cinema films will be listed first, followed by the his works for television. The decisive criterion for the distinction between cinema and television films is the way in which production costs were raised. The following abbreviations will be used:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| dir- | director (only mentioned if there is a co-director) | m- | music |
| | | pr- | props |
| sc- | script | a- | actors |
| c- | camera | p- | producer |
| ed- | editor | r- | format |
| s- | sound | d - | distributor |

# The Cinema Films

## Early Experiments

1966 ***This Night***
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; r: short film, col.

1966 ***Der Stadtstreicher*** (The City Tramp)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Josef Jung; a: Christoph Roser, Susanne Schimkus, Michael Fengler, Thomas Fengler, Irm Hermann, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; p: Roser- Film; r: 16 min, b/w; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1967 ***Das kleine Chaos*** (The Little Mess)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Michael Fengler; s: Amin Athanassious; a: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Marite Greiselis, Christoph Roser, Lilo Pempeit, Greta Rehfeld, Susanne Schimkus; p: Roser-Film; r: 9 min, b/w; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

## The antiteater Films

1969 ***Liebe ist kälter als der Tod*** (Love is Colder than Death)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Dietrich Lohmann; ed: Franz Walsch (i.e. Rainer Werner Fassbinder); s: Gottfried Hüngsberg; m: Peer Raben, Holger Münzer; pr: Ulli Lommel, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; a: Ulli Lommel, Hanna Schygulla, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Hans Hirschmüller, Katrin Schaake, Peter Berling, Hannes Gromball, Gisela Otto, Ingrid Caven, Ursula Strätz, Irm Hermann, Les Olvides, Wil Rabenbauer, Peter Moland, Anastasios Karalas, Rudolf Waldemar Brem, Yaak Karsunke, Monika Stadler, Kurt Raab, Thomas Hill, Liz Söllner, Howard Gaines, Franz Maron, Gottfried Hüngsberg; p: antiteater-X-film; r: 88 min, b/w; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1969 ***Katzelmacher***
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Dietrich Lohmann; ed: Franz Walsch (i.e. Rainer Werner Fassbinder); s: Gottfried Hüngsberg; m: Peer Raben (nach Franz Schubert); pr: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; a: Hanna Schygulla, Lilith Ungerer, Elga Sorbas, Doris Mattes, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Rudolf Waldemar Brem, Hans Hirschmüller, Harry Baer, Peter Moland, Hannes Gromball, Irm Hermann, Katrin Schaake; p: antiteater-X-film; r: 88 min, b/w; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1969 ***Götter der Pest*** (Gods of the Plague)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Dietrich Lohmann; ed: Franz Walsch (i.e. Rainer Werner Fassbinder), Thea Eymèsz; s: Gottfried Hüngsberg; m: Peer Raben; pr: Kurt Raab; a: Harry Baer, Hanna Schygulla, Margarethe von Trotta, Günther Kaufmann, Carla Aulaulu, Ingrid Caven, Jan George, Marian Seidowski, Yaak Karsunke, Micha Cochina, Hannes Gromball, Lilith Ungerer, Katrin Schaake, Lilo Pempeit, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, David Morgan, Thomas Schieder, Irm Hermann, Peter Moland, Doris Mattes; p: antiteater; r: 91 min, b/w; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1970 ***Whity***
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Michael Ballhaus; ed: Franz Walsch (i.e. Rainer Werner Fassbinder), Thea Eymèsz; m: Peer Raben; pr: Kurt Raab; a: Günther Kaufmann, Hanna Schygulla, Ulli Lommel, Harry Baer, Katrin Schaake, Ron Randell, Thomas Blanco, Stefano Capriati, Elaine Baker, Mark Salvage, Helga Ballhaus, Kurt Raab, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; p: Atlantis Film / antiteater-X-film; r: 95 min, col, Cinemascope; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1970 ***Der amerikanische Soldat*** (The American Soldier)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Dietrich Lohmann; ed: Thea Eymèsz; m: Peer Raben/ Rainer Werner Fassbinder; pr: Kurt Raab, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; a: Karl Scheydt, Elga Sorbas, Jan George, Margarethe von Trotta, Hark Bohm, Ingrid Caven, Eva Ingeborg Scholz, Kurt Raab, Marius Aicher, Gustl Datz, Marquard Bohm, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Katrin Schaake, Ulli Lommel, Irm Hermann; p: antiteater; r: 80 min, b/w; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1970 ***Warnung vor einer heiligen Nutte*** (Beware of a Holy Whore)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Michael Ballhaus; ed: Franz Walsch (i.e. Rainer Werner Fassbinder), Thea Eymèsz; m: Peer Raaben, Gaetano Donizetti, Elvis Presley, Ray Charles, Leonhard Cohen, Spooky Tooth; pr: Kurt Raab; a: Lou Castel, Eddi Constantine, Hanna Schygulla, Marquard Bohm, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Ulli Lommel, Katrin Schaake, Benjamin Lev, Monika Teuber, Margarethe von Trotta, Gianni di Luigi, Rudolf Waldemar Brem, Herb Andress, Thomas Schieder, Kurt Raab, Hannes Fuchs, Marcella Michelangeli, Ingrid Caven, Harry Baer, Magdalena Montezuma, Werner Schroeter, Karl Scheydt, Tanja Constantine, Maria Novelli, Enzo Monteduro, Achmed Em Bark, Michael Fengler, Burghard Schlicht, Dick Randall, Peter Berling, Tony Bianchi, Renato dei Laudadio, Gianni Javarone, Peter Gauhe; p: antiteater-X-film / Nova International, Rome; r: 103 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1972-74 ***Fontane Effi Briest***
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Dietrich Lohmann, Jürgen Jürges; ed: Thea Eymèsz; s: Fritz Müller-Scherz; m: Camille Saint-Saens et al.; pr: Kurt Raab; a: Hanna Schygulla, Wolfgang Schenck, Karheinz Böhm, Ulli Lommel, Ursula Strätz, Irm Hermann, Lilo Pempeit, Herbert Steinmetz, Hark Bohm, Rudolf Lenz, Barbara Valentin, Karl Scheydt, Theo Tecklenburg, Barbara Lass, Eva Mattes, Andrea Schober, Anndorthe Braker, Peter Gauhe, voice of the narrator: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; p: Tango-Film Munich; r: 141 min, b/w; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

## The Douglas Sirk-Inspired Melodramas

1971 ***Händler der vier Jahreszeiten*** (Merchant of four Seasons)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Dietrich Lohmann; ed: Thea Eymèsz; m: Rocco Granata, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; pr: Kurt Raab; a: Hans Hirschmüller, Irm Hermann, Hanna Schygulla, Andrea Schober, Gusti Kreissl, Kurt Raab, Heide Simon, Klaus Löwitsch, Karl Scheydt, Ingrid Caven, Peter Chatel, Lilo Pempeit, Walter Sedlmayr, El Hedi ben Salem, Hark Bohm, Daniel Schmid, Harry Baer, Maian Seidowski, Michael Fengler, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Elga Sorbas; p: Tango-Film Munich; r: 89 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1972 ***Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant*** (The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, c: Michael Balhaus; ed: Thea Eymèsz; s: Gunther Kortwich; m: Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach, Buck Ram, Joacquin Pirieto, Lee Pockriss and Paul Vince, Giuseppe Verdi; pr: Kurt Raab; a: Margit Carstensen, Hanna Schygulla, Irm Hermann, Eva Mattes, Katrin Schaake, Gisela Fackeldey; p: Tango-Film Munich, r: 124 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1973 ***Angst essen Seele auf*** ( *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Jürgen Jürges; ed: Thea Eymèsz; s: Fritz Müller-Scherz; m: archive; pr: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; a: Brigitte Mira, El Hedi ben Salem, Barbara Valentin, Irm Hermann, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Karl Scheydt, Elma Karlowa, Anita Bucher, Gusti Kreissl, Walter Sedlmayr, Doris Mattes, Liselotte Eder, Marquard Bohm, Hannes Gromball, Katharina Herberg, Rudolf Waldemar Brem, Peter Moland, Margit Symo, Peter Gauhe, Helga Ballhaus, Elisabeth Bertram, Hark Bohm; p: Tango-Film Munich; r: 93 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1974 ***Faustrecht der Freiheit*** (*Fox and his Friends*)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Michael Ballhaus; ed: Thea Eymèsz; m: Peer Raben, Pearl King / Dave Bartholomew, Leonhard Cohen; pr: Kurt Raab; a: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Peter Chatel, Karlheinz Böhm, Rudolf Lenz, Karl Scheydt, Hans Zander, Kurt Raab, Adrian Hoven, Ulla Jacobson, Irm Hermann, Kitty Buchhammer, Ursula Strätz, Christiane Maybach, Elma Karlowa, Harry Baer, Peter Kern, Barbara Valentin, Bruce Low, Walter Sedlmayr, El Hedi ben Salem, Evelyn Künneke, Ingrid Caven, Marquard Bohm, Lilo Pempeit, Hannes Gromball; p: Tango-Film Munich / City Film GmbH Berlin; r: 123 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1975 ***Mutter Küsters' Fahrt zum Himmel*** (Mother Küster's Trip to Heaven)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Kurt Raab; c: Michael Ballhaus; ed: Thea Eymèsz; s: Wolfgang Hoffmann; m: Peer Raben; pr: Kurt Raab; a: Brigitte Mira, Ingrid Caven, Karlheinz Böhm, Margit Carstensen, Irm Hermann, Gottfried John, Armin Meier, Kurt Raab, Peter Kern, Gustav Holzapfel, Volker Spengler, Peter Chatel, Vitus Zeplichal, Y Sa Lo, Lilo Pempeit, Matthias Fuchs; p: Tango-Film Munich; r: 120 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

## Towards an Artaudian Film Aesthetics

1975/76 ***Satansbraten*** (Satan's Brew)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Jürgen Jürges, Michael Ballhaus; ed: Thea Eymèsz, Gabi Eichel; s: Paul Schöler, Rolf-Peter Notz, Roland Henschke; m: Peer Raben, pr: Kurt Raab, Ulrike Bode; a: Kurt Raab, Margit Carstensen, Helen Vita, Volker Spengler, Ingrid Caven, Marquard Bohm, Ulli Lommel, Y Sa Lo, Katharina Buchhammer, Armin Meier, Vitus Zeplichal, Dieter Schidor, Peter Chatel, Michael Octave, Katren Gebelein, Helmut Petigk, Hannes Gromball, Adrian Hoven, Monika

Teuber; p: Albatros Produktion Munich / Trio-Film Duisburg; r: 112 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1976 ***Chinesisches Roulette*** (Chinese Roulette)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Michael Ballhaus; ed: Ila von Hasperg, Juliane Lorenz; s: Roland Henschke, m: Peer Raben; pr: Curd Melber; a: Margit Carstensen, Anna Karina, Alexander Allerson, Ulli Lommel, Andrea Schober, Macha Mèril, Brigitte Mira, Volker Spengler, Armin Meier, Roland Henschke; p: Albatros Produktion Munich / Les Films du Losange Paris; r: 86 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1977 ***Despair - Eine Reise ins Licht*** (*Despair*)
sc: Tom Stoppard / Vladimir Nabokov; c: Michael Ballhaus; ed: Juliane Lorenz, Franz Walsch (i.e. Raincr Werner Fassbinder); s: James Willis; m: Peer Raben; pr: Rolf Zehetbauer; a: Dirk Bogarde, Andrea Ferréol, Volker Spengler, Klaus Löwitsch, Alexander Allerson, Bernhard Wicki, Peter Kern, Gottfried John, Adrian Hoven, Roger Fritz, Hark Bohm, Y Sa Lo, Liselotte Eder, Armin Meier, Gitti Djamal, Ingrid Caven; p: NF Geria II Film GmbH Munich / SFP Paris / Bavaria Atelier GmbH; r: 119 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1977/78 ***Deutschland im Herbst*** (Germany in Autumn)
Fassbinder's contribution to the omnibus film: sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Michael Ballhaus; ed: Juliane Lorenz; s: Roland Henschke; a: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Armin Meier, Liselotte Eder, p: Pro-jekt Filmproduktion im Filmverlag der Autoren / Hallelujah - Film / Kairos-Film; r: 26 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1978 ***In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden*** (In a Year with 13 Moons)
sc, c, ed, pr: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; s: Karl Scheydt, Wolfgang Mund; m: Peer Raben, Suicide, Roxy Music; a: Volker Spengler, Ingrid Caven, Gottfried John, Elisabeth Trissenaar, Eva Mattes, Günther Kaufmann, Liselotte Pempeit, Isolde Barth, Karl Scheydt, Walter Bockmayer, Peter Kollek, Bob Dorsay, Günther Holzapfel, Ursula Lillig, Gerhard Zwerenz; p: Tango-Film Munich / Pro-ject Filmproduktion im Filmverlag der Autoren; r: 124 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1978/79 ***Die dritte Generation*** (The Third Generation)
sc and c: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; ed: Juliane Lorenz; s: Hartmut Eichgrün, Jean Luc Marié; m: Peer Raben; pr: Raul Gimenez, Volker Spengler, a: Volker Spengler, Bulle Ogier, Hanna Schygulla, Harry Baer, Vitus Zeplichal, Udo Kier, Margit Carstensen, Günther Kaufmann, Eddi Constantine, Raul Gimenez, Y Sa Lo, Hark Bohm, Claus Holm, Lilo Pempeit, Jürgen Draeger; p: Tango-Film Berlin / Pro-ject Filmproduktion im Filmverlag der Autoren Munich; r: 110 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1981 ***Die Sehsucht der Veronika Voss*** (The Longing of Veronika Voss)
sc: Peter Märthesheimer, Pea Fröhlich, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Xaver Schwarzenberger; ed: Juliane Lorenz, s: Vladimir Vizner; m: Peer Raben; pr: Rolf Zehetbauer; a: Rosel Zech, Hilmar Thate, Cornelia Froboess, Annemarie Düringer, Doris Schade, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Johanna Hofer, Rudolf Platte, Eric Schumann, Peter Berling, Günther Kaufmann, Sonja Neudorfer, Lilo Pempeit, Volker Spengler, Herbert Steinmetz, Elisabeth Volkmann, Hans Wyprächtiger, Peter Zadek, Tamara Kafka, Juliane Lorenz, Dieter Schidor, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; p: Laura-Film Munich / Tango-Film Munich / Rialto-Film Berlin / Trio-Film Duisburg / Maran-Film Munich; r: 104 min, b/w; d: Filmverlag der Autoren

1982 ***Querelle***
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Jean Genet; c: Xaver Schwarzenberger; ed: Juliane Lorenz, Franz Walsch (i.e. Rainer Werner Fassbinder); s: Vladimir Vizner; m: Peer Raben; pr: Rolf Zehetbauer; a: Brad Davis, Franco Nero, Jeanne Moreau, Laurent Malet, Hanno Pöschl, Günther Kaufmann, Burkhard Driest, Dieter Schidor, Roger Fritz, Karl Scheydt, Gilles Gavois, Michael McLernon, Robert Van Ackeren, Wolf Gremm, Frank Ripploh, Werner Asam, Axel Bauer, Vitus Zeplichal, Karl-Heinz von Hassel, Neil Bell, Volker Spengler, Harry Baer, Y Sa Lo, Isolde Barth, Natja Brunckhorst, narrator's voice: Hilmar Thate; p: Planet-Film Munich / Albatros Produktion Munich / Gaumont Paris / in co-operation with Sam Waynberg; r: 106 min, Cinemascope, col; d: Scotia.

# Films Produced, Co-Produced or Commissioned by Television

## Television as an Extension of the Cinema

1969 ***Warum läuft Herr R. Amok?*** (Why Does Her R, Run Amok?)
dir: Michael Fengler, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; sc: Michael Fengler, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Dietrich Lohmann; ed: Franz Walsch (i.e. Rainer Werner Fassbinder), Michael Fengler; s: Klaus Eckelt; m: Peer Raben, Christian Anders; a: Kurt Raab, Lilith Ungerer, Amadeus Fengler, Franz Maron, Harry Baer, Peter Moland, Lilo Pempeit; Hanna Schygulla, Herr & Frau Sterr, Peer Raben, Carla Aulaulu, Eva Pampuch, Ingrid Caven, Doris Mattes, Irm Hermann, Hannes Gromball, Peter Hamm, Jochen Pinkert, Eva Madelung, Johannes Fengler, Niels-Peter Rudolph, Paul Haller, Ulli Lommel, Katrin Schaake, Volker Schlöndorff, Margarethe von Trotta, Reinhard Hauff, Hanna Axmann-Rezzori, Günther Kaufmann; p: antiteater / Maran-

Film (commissioned by Süddeutscher Rundfunk Stuttgart); r: 88 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1970 ***Rio das Mortes***
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Volker Schlöndorff; c: Dietrich Lohmann; ed: Thea Eymèsz; m: Peer Raben; pr: Kurt Raab; a: Hanna Schygulla, Michael König, Günther Kaufmann, Katrin Schaake, Joachim von Mengershausen, Lilo Pempeit, Franz Maron, Harry Baer, Marius Aicher, Carla Aulaulu, Walter Sedlmayr, Ulli Lommel, Monika Stadler, Hanna Axmann-Rezzori, Ingrid Caven, Kerstin Dobbertin, Magdalena Montezuma, Elga Sorbas, Kurt Raab, Rudolf Waldemar Brem, Carl Amery, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Eva Pampuch; p: Janus Film & Fernsehen / antiteater-X-film; r: 84 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1970 ***Das Kaffeehaus*** (The Coffee Shop)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Carlo Goldoni; c: Dietbert Schmidt, Manfred Förster; m: Peer Raben; pr: Wilfried Minks; a: Margit Carstensen, Ingrid Caven, Hanna Schygulla, Kurt Raab, Harry Baer, Hans Hirschmüller, Günther Kaufmann, Peter Moland, Wil Rabenbauer; p: Westdeutscher Rundfunk Cologne; 105 min video.

1970 ***Die Niklashauser Fart*** (The Niklashausen Journey)
dir: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Michael Fengler; sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Michael Fengler; c: Dietrich Lohmann, ed: Thea Eymèsz, Franz Walsch (i.e. Rainer Werner Fassbinder); m: Peer Raben, Amon Düül, pr: Kurt Raab; a; Michael König, Michael Gordon, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Hanna Schygulla, Walter Sedlmayr, Margit Carstensen, Franz Maron, Kurt Raab, Günther Rupp, Karl Scheydt, Günther Kaufmann, Siggi Graue, Michael Fengler, Ingrid Caven, Elga Sorbas, Carla Aulaulu, Peer Raben, Peter Berling, Magdalena Montezuma; p: Janus Fim & Fernsehen (commissioned by Westdeutscher Rundfunk Cologne); r: 86 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1970 ***Pioniere in Ingolstadt*** (Pioneers in Ingolstadt)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Marieluise Fleißer; c: Dietrich Lohmann; ed: Thea Eymèsz; m: Peer Raben; pr: Kurt Raab; a: Hanna Schygulla, Harry Baer, Irm Hermann, Rudolf Waldemar Brem, Walter Sedlmayr, Klaus Löwitsch, Günther Kaufmann, Carla Aulaulu, Elga Sorbas, Burghard Schlicht, Gunther Krää; p: Janus Film & Fernsehen (commissioned by second television channel ZDF); r: 83 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1972 ***Wildwechsel*** (Jail Bait)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Franz Xaver Kroetz; c: Dietrich Lohmann, ed: Thea Eymèsz; m: Ludwig van Beethoven, Paul Anka; pr: Kurt Raab; a: Jörg von Liebenfels, Ruth Drexel, Eva Mattes, Harry Baer, Rudolf Waldemar Brem, Hanna Schygulla, Kurt Raab, Karl Scheydt, Klaus Löwitsch, Irm Hermann, Marquard Bohm, El Hedi ben Salem; p: Intertel (commissioned by Sender Freies Berlin); r: 102 min, col; d: none.

## The Appropriation of Television Aesthetics

1972 ***Acht Stunden sind kein Tag*** (Eight Hours Are not a Day)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Dietrich Lohmann; ed: Marie Anne Gerhardt; m: Jean Gepoint (i.e. Jens Wilhelm Petersen); pr: Kurt Raab; a: Gottfried John, Hanna Schygulla, Luise Ullrich, Werner Fink, Anita Bucher, Wolfried Lier, Christine Oesterlein, Renate Roland, Kurt Raab, Andrea Schober, Thorsten Massinger, Irm Hermann, Wolfgang Zerlett, Wolfgang Schenck, Herb Andress, Rudolf Waldemar Brem, Hans Hirschmüller, Peter Gauhe, Grigorios Karipidis, Karl Scheydt, Victor Curland, Rainer Hauer, Margit Carstensen, Christiane Janessen, Doris Mattes, Gusti Kreissl, Lilo Pempeit, Katrin Schaake, Rudolf Lenz, Jörg von Liebenfels, Ulli Lommel, Ruth Drexel, Walter Sedlmayr, Helga Feddersen, Heinz Meier, Karl-Heinz Vosgerau, Peter Chatel, Valeska Gert, Eva Mattes, Marquard Bohm, Klaus Löwitsch, Hannes Gromball, Peter Märthesheimer; p: Westdeutscher Rundfunk Cologne; r: part I: 101 min, part II: 99 min, part III: 92 min, part IV: 89 min, part V: 89 min, colour.

1972 ***Bremer Freiheit*** (Bremen Freedom)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Dietrich Lohmann, Hans Schugg, Peter Weyrich; ed: Friedrich Niquet, Monika Solzbacher; m: archive; pr: Kurt Raab; a: Margit Carstensen, Ulli Lommel, Wolfgang Schenck, Walter Sedlmayr, Wolfgang Kieling, Rudolf Waldemar Brem, Kurt Raab, Fritz Schediwy, Hanna Schygulla, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Lilo Pempeit; p: Telefilm Saar (commissioned by Saarländischer Rundfunk Saarbrücken); r: 87 min, video.

1973 ***Welt am Draht*** (World on the Wire)
sc: Fritz Müller-Scherz, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Daniel F. Galouye; c: Michael Ballhaus; ed: Marie Anne Gerhardt; m: Gottfried Hüngsberg, archive; pr: Kurt Raab; a: Klaus Löwitsch, Mascha Rabben, Adrian, Hoven, Ivan Desny, Barbara Valentin, Karl-Heinz Vosgerau, Günter Lamprecht, Margit Carstensen, Wolfgang Schenck, Joachim Hansen, Rudolf Lenz, Kurt Raab, Karl Scheydt, Rainer Hauer, Ulli Lommel, Heinz Meier, Peter Chatel, Ingrid Caven, Eddi Constantine, Gottfried John, Elma Karlowa, Christine Kaufmann, Rainer Langhans, Bruce Low, Karsten Peters, Katrin Schaake, Walter Sedlmayr, El Hedi ben Salem, Christiane Maybach, Rudolf Waldemar Brem, Peter Kern, Ernst Küsters, Peter Moland, Doris Mattes, Liselotte Eder, Solange Pradel, Maryse Dellannoy, Werner Schroeter, Magdalena Montezuma, Corinna Brocher, Peter Gauhe, Dora Karras-Frank; p: Westdeutscher Rundfunk Cologne; r: part I: 99 min, part II 106 min, col.

1973 ***Nora Helmer***
sc: Henrik Ibsen, Bernhard Schulze; c: Willi Raber, Wilfried Mier, Peter Weyrich, Gisela Loew, Hans Schugg; ed: Anne-Marie Bornheimer, Friedrich Niquet; m: archive; pr: Friedhelm Boehm; a: Margit Carstensen, Joachim Hansen, Barbara Valentin, Ulli Lommel, Klaus Löwitsch, Lilo Pempeit, Irm Hermann; p: Telefilm Saar (commissioned by Saarländischer Rundfunk, Saarbrücken); r: 101 min, video.

1974 ***Wie ein Vogel auf dem Draht*** (Like a Bird on the Wire)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Christian Hohoff; c: Erhard Spandel; m: Anja Hauptmann, Ingfried Hoffmann, Orchestra Kurt Edelhagen; pr: Kurt Raab; p: Westdeutscher Rundfunk Cologne; r: 44 min, video.

1975 ***Angst vor der Angst*** (Fear of Fear)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Asta Scheib; c: Jürgen Jürges, Ulrich Prinz, ed: Liesgret Schmitt-Klink, Beate Fischer-Weiskirch; m: Peer Raben; pr: Kurt Raab; a: Margit Carstensen, Ulrich Faulhaber, Brigitte Mira, Irm Hermann, Armin Meier, Adrian Hoven, Kurt Raab, Ingrid Caven, Lilo Pempeit, Helga Märthesheimer, Herbert Steinmetz, Hark Bohm, Constanze Haas; p: Westdeutscher Rundfunk; r: 88 min, col.

1975/76 ***Ich will doch nur, daß ihr mich liebt*** (I Only Want You to Love Me)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Klaus Antes, Christine Ehrhardt; c: Michael Ballhaus; ed: Liesgret Schmitt-Klink; s: Karsten Ullrich; m: Peer Raben; pr: Kurt Raab; a: Vitus Zeplichal, Elke Aberle, Alexander Allerson, Ernie Mangold, Johanna Hofer, Katharina Buchhammer, Wolfgang Hess, Armin Meier, Erika Runge, Ulrich Radke, Annemarie Wendl, Janos Gönczöl, Edith Volkmann, Robert Naegele, Axel Ganz, Inge Schulz, Heinz H. Bernstein, Helga Bender, Adi Gruber, Sonja Neudorfer, Heide Ackermann, Reinhard Brex; p: Bavaria Atelier GmbH (commissioned by Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Cologne; r: 104 min, col.

1976/77 ***Bolwieser*** (*The Stationmaster's Wife*)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Oskar Maria Graf; c: Michael Ballhaus; ed: Ila von Hasperg, Juliane Lorenz; s: Reinhard Gloge; m: Peer Raben; pr: Kurt Raab, Nico Kehrhan; a: Kurt Raab, Elisabeth Trissenaar, Bernhard Helfrich, Udo Kier, Volker Spengler, Armin Meier, Karl-Heinz von Hassel, Gustl Bayrhammer, Maria Singer, Willi Harlander, Hannes Kaetner, Gusti Kreissl, Helmut Alimonta, Peter Kern, Gottfried John, Gerhard Zwerenz, Helmut Petigk, Sonja Neudorfer, Monika Teuber, Nino Korda, Hannes Gromball, Alexander Allerson, Manfred Gunther, Roland Henschke, Adolph Gruber, Doris Mattes, Ulrich Radke, Liselotte Pempeit, Reinhard Weiser, Elma Karlowa, Isolde Barth, Margot Mahler, Renate Muhri, Monika Gruber, Katharina Buchhammer, Karl Scheydt; p: Bavaria Atelier GmbH (commissioned by the second television channel ZDF); r: TV version: part I: 104 min, part II: 96 min, cinema version: 112 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1977 ***Fauen in New York*** (Women in New York)
sc: Claire Boothe, Nora Gray; c: Michael Ballhaus; ed: Wolfgang Kerhutt; s: Horst Faahs; pr: Rolf Glittenberg; a: Christa Berndl, Margit Carstensen, Anne-Marie Kuster, Eva Mattes, Angela Schmid, Heide Grübl, Ehmi Bessl, Susanne Werth, Carola Schwarz, Irm Hermann, Adelheid Müther, Ilse Bally, Andrea Grosske, Christina Prior, Gisela Uhlen, Barbara Sukowa, Henny Zschoppe, Sabine Wegener; p: Norddeutscher Rundfunk Hamburg; r:111 min, col.

## Television-Funded Films with a Cinematic Formula

1973 ***Martha***
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Michael Ballhaus; ed: Liesgret Schmitt-Klink; m: archive; pr: Kurt Raab; a: Margit Carstensen, Karlheinz Böhm, Gisela Fackeldey, Adrian Hoven, Barbara Valentin, Ingrid Caven, Ortrud Beginnen, Wolfgang Schenck, Günter Lamprecht, Peter Chatel, El Hedi ben Salem, Kurt Raab, Rudolf Lenz; p: Westdeutscher Rundfunk Cologne; r: 111min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1978 ***Die Ehe der Maria Braun*** (The Marriage of Maria Braun)
sc: Peter Märthesheimer, Pea Fröhlich, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; c: Michael Ballhaus, ed: Franz Walsch (i.e. Rainer Werner Fassbinder), Juliane Lorenz; s: Jim Willis; m: Peer Raben; pr: Helga Ballhaus; a: Hanna Schygulla, Klaus Löwitsch, Ivan Desny, Gottfried John, Gisela Uhlen, Günter Lamprecht, George Byrd, Elisabeth Trissenaar, Isolde Barth, Peter Berling, Sonja Neudorfer, Liselotte Eder, Volker Spengler, Karl-Heinz von Hassel, Michael Ballhaus, Christine Hopf-de Loup, Hark Bohm, Dr. Horst-Dieter Klock, Günther Kaufmann, Bruce Low, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Claus Holm, Anton Schirsner, Hannes Kaetner, Martin Häussler, Norbert Scherer, Rolf Bührmann, Arthur Glogau; p: Albatros Produktion Munich / Trio-Film Duisburg / Westdeutscher Rundfunk Cologne; r: 120 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1979/80 ***Berlin Alexanderplatz***
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Alfred Döblin, Harry Baer; c: Xaver Schwarzenberger, ed: Juliane Lorenz, Franz Walsch (i.e. Rainer Werner Fassbinder); s: Karten Ulrich; m: Peer Raben; pr: Helmut Gassner, Werner Achmann, Jürgen Henze; a: Günter Lamprecht, Hanna Schygulla, Babara Sukowa, Gottfried John, Franz Buchrieser, Claus Holm, Brigitte Mira, Roger Fritz, Herb Andress, Werner Asam, Katrin Baal, Harry Baer, Wolfgang Bathke, Axel Bauer, Hark Bohm, Marquard Bohm, Karl-Heinz Braun, Margit Carstensen, Ivan Desny, Jürgen Draeger, Annemarie Düringer, Liselotte Eder, Almut Eggert, Matthias Fuchs, Dirk Galuba, Jan George, Raul Gimenez, Mechthild Grossmann, Jan Grot, Elke Haltaufderheide, Karl-Heinz von Hassel, Siegfried Hechler, Irm Hermann, Traute Hoess, Klaus Höhne, Adrian Hoven, Elma Karlowa, Günther Kaufmann, Udo Kier, Peter Kollek, Peter Kuiper, Horst Laube, Hermann Lause, Georg Lehn, Christiane de Loup, Marie-Luise Marjan, Christiane Maybach, Magdalena Montezuma, Sonja Neudorfer, Eberhard von Nordhausen, Helmut Petigk, Dieter Prochnow, Peer Raben, Hans Michael Rehberg, Katrin Schaake, Roland Schäfer, Fritz Schediwy, Karl Scheydt, Wolfgang Schenck, Angela Schmid, Werner Schroeter, Volker Spengler, Herbert Steinmetz, Elisabeth Trissenaar, Barbara Valentin, Helen Vita, Y Sa Lo, Rolf Zacher, Hans Zander, Vitus Zeplichal, Gerhard Zwerenz; p: Bavaria Atelier GmbH / RAI (commissioned by Westdeutscher Rundfunk Cologne): r: part I: 81 min, part II: 59 min, part III: 59 min, part IV: 59 min, part V: 59 min, part VI: 58 min, part VII: 58 min, part VIII: 58 min, part IX: 58 min, part X: 59 min, part XI: 59 min, part XII: 59 min, part XIII: 59 min, epilogue: 111 min, colour.

1980 ***Lili Marleen***
sc: Manfred Purzner, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Lale Andersen, Joshua Sinclair; c: Xaver Schwarzenberger; ed: Juliane Lorenz, Franz Walsch (i.e. Rainer Werner Fassbinder); s: Karsten Ulrich, Milan Bor; m: Peer Raben, Norbert Schulze; pr: Rolf Zehetbauer; a: Hanna Schygulla, Giancarlo Giannini, Mel Ferrer, Karl-Heinz von Hassel, Christine Kaufmann, Hark Bohm, Karin Baal, Udo Kier, Erik Schumann, Gottfried John, Elisabeth Volkmann, Barbara Valentin, Helen Vita, Adrian Hoven, Willy Harlander, Toni Netzle, Roger Fritz, Franz Buchrieser, Rainer Will, Lilo Pempeit, Raul Gimenez, Alexander Allerson, Rudolf Lenz, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Jürgen Draeger, Michael McLernon, Brigitte Mira, Traute Höss, Herb Andress, Daniel Schmid, Irm Hermann, Harry Baer, Arthur Albrecht, Werner Asam, Milan Bor, Peter Chatel, Volker Eckstein, Paul Felix, Dirk Galuba, Arno E. Hausch, Peter Kollek, Jörg von Liebenfels, Christine de Loup, Sonja Neudorfer, Helmut Petigk, Joachim Schulz, Volker Spengler, Herbert Steinmetz; p: Roxy-Film Munich / Rialto-Film Berlin / CIP Rome / Bayerischer Rundfunk Munich; r: 120 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1981 ***Lola***
sc: Peter Märthesheimer, Pea Fröhlich; c: Xaver Schwarzenberger; ed: Juliane Lorenz; s: Vladimir Vizner; m: Peer Raben; pr: Raul Gimenez, Udo Kier; a: Barbara Sukowa, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Mario Adorf, Matthias Fuchs, Helga Feddersen, Karin Baal, Ivan Desny, Karl-Heinz von Hassel, Sonja Neudorfer, Elisabeth Volkmann, Hark Bohm, Rosel Zech, Isolde Barth, Christine Kaufmann, Y Sa Lo, Kasten Peters, Nino Korda, Raoul Gimenez, Udo Kier, Harry Baer, Rainer Will, Andrea Heuer, Ulrike Vigo, Herbert Steinmetz, Günther Kaufmann, Helmut Petigk, Juliane Lorenz, Marita Pleyer; p: Rialto-Film Berlin / Trio-Film Duisburg / Westdeutscher Rundfunk Cologne; r: 113 min, col; d: Filmverlag der Autoren.

1981 ***Theater in Trance*** (Theatre in Trance)
sc: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Antonin Artaud, c: Werner Lüring, ed: Juliane Lorenz, Franz Walsch (i.e. Rainer Werner Fassbinder), s: Vladimir Vizner; features: Het Werkteater Amsterdam, Squat Theatre New York, Sombrad Blancas Mexico, Kipper Kids Kalifornien, Magazzini Criminali Florenz, Pina Bausch & Wuppertaler Tanztheater, Jérôme Savary, Yoshi Oida; p: Laura-Film Munich (commissioned by second television channel ZDF); r: 91 min, col.

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